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The AGA KHANS

WILLI FRISCHAUER

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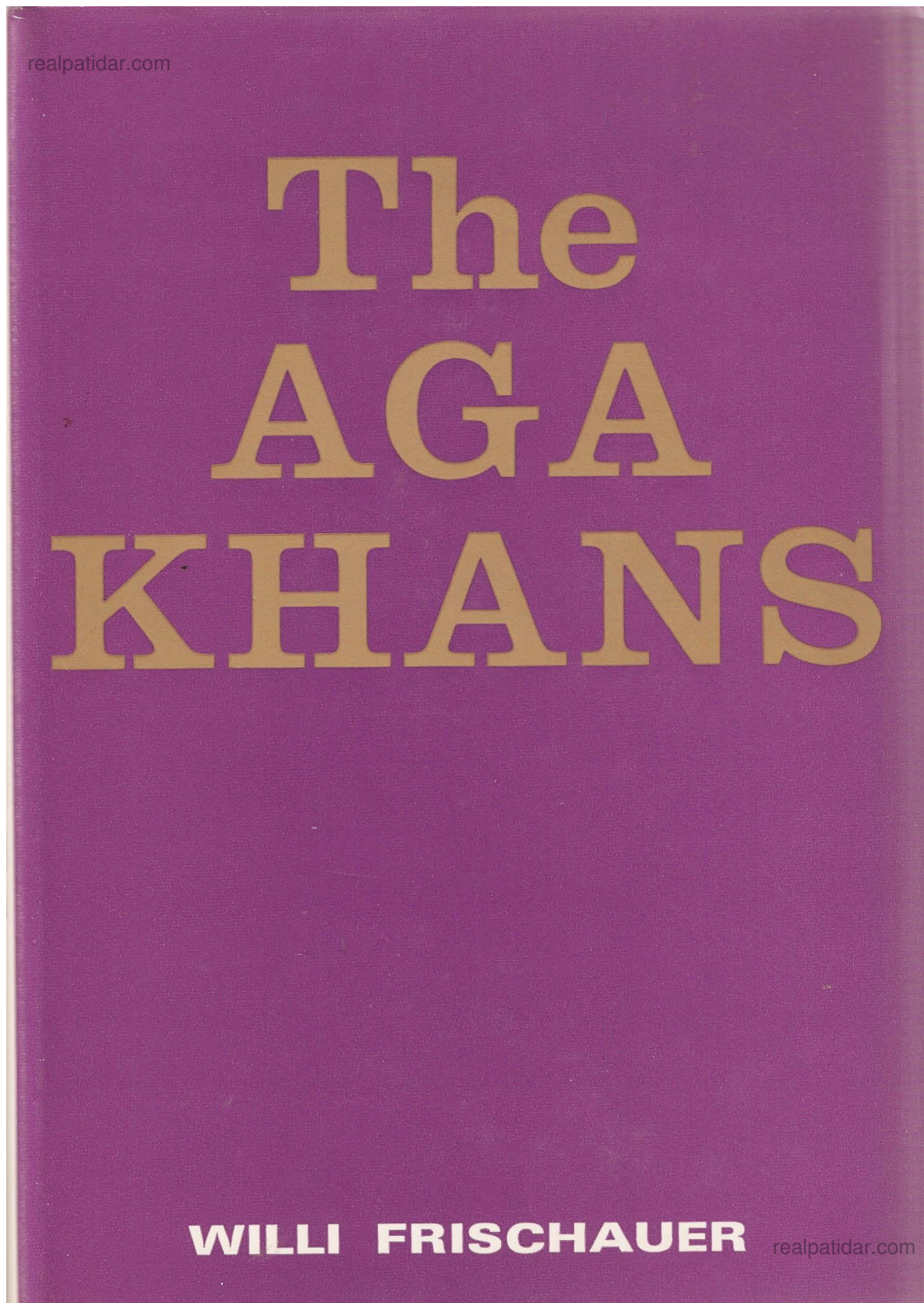
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Twilight in Vienna

The Nazis at War

Goering

Himmler

The Navy's Here

(written with Robert Jackson)

The Man Who Came Back

European Commuter

Grand Hotels of Europe

Onassis

FRONTISPIECE

Taken in the spacious drawing-room of his Paris château in the Ile de la Cité, overlooking the Seine, this rare photograph shows the Aga Khan with his whole family. Seated from left to right are Princess Andrée, third wife of the late Aga Khan, Princess Joan Aly Khan, the Aga Khan's mother, Prince Karim, the Aga Khan, Princess Salima, his wife, Princess Mohammed Shah, the fourth and last wife of the late Aga Khan, and Princess Yasmin, daughter of Aly Khan and Rita Hayworth and half-sister to the Aga Khan. Standing, on the left, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, High Commissioner for Refugees in the United Nations, son of Princess Andrée and the late Aga Khan and uncle of Prince Karim, and Prince Ameen, brother of Prince Karim, who works with him in his Geneva headquarters.

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The Aga Khans



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WHEN I first told Prince Karim Aga Khan that I proposed to write his life story against the background of his family, his ancestors and the Ismaili community of which he is the spiritual head, he suggested that, before talking to him, I should spend a year or two reading the literature on the subject. He was not far out. Before I went much further, I met a Muslim scholar in East Africa who was working on an Ismaili bibliography, had so far listed some two hundred and sixty volumes and was still going strong. In Karachi, Vazir Sherali Alidina's 'Dr Alidina Memorial Library' was stacked to the ceiling with works on Ismaili history, ancient and contemporary. The Aga Khan himself drew my attention to several learned tomes on related and relevant topics.

Every single phase of the colourful Ismaili story from the first Ali (A.D. 600-661), Mohammed's son-in-law, to the better known last Aly (1911-1960), the Aga Khan's father, had found a more or less loyal chronicler. The quarrel between the Prophet's daughter and his child bride, his grandson, 'the Great Divorcer', the turbulent reign of the Fatimids in Egypt, the Ismaili 'underground', the notorious (or much maligned) Assassins, the first Aga Khan, who helped the British to conquer Sind, the third Aga Khan, Prince Karim's grandfather and predecessor as Imam of the Ismailis (and five-time winner of the English Derby), have provided historians and diarists with ample material for narratives. But, although his name is a household word that figures even in pop songs, little is known of Karim Aga Khan except what has appeared in the gossip columns of western newspapers.

What seemed lacking, however, was one comprehensive account spanning the whole scintillating rainbow from Mohammed to Karim, and this is what I set out to produce. History, religion, war, women, politics, racing and big business are some of the raw material I have used. My aim was to trace the story from the very beginning but with growing emphasis on the last three of the line, the old Aga Khan, Aly Khan and Karim Aga Khan, whose life takes on a



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new meaning in the context of his religious and dynastic antecedents.

While it was impracticable for me to visit every outpost of the Aga Khan's spiritual Ismaili empire (his religious subjects in China, Soviet Russia and other parts are 'out of touch'), I spent some time at Ismaili centres in East Africa and Pakistan, and owe Ismaili dignitaries and councillors much enlightenment. What I saw of Ismaili educational, medical and social work was so impressive, I had to restrain my enthusiasm because my purpose was not to write Ismaili social history but a treble biography. I have talked at length with the Aga Khan and with members of his brains-trust who have answered many of my questions though by no means all. While I am grateful for the time they have given me, I have, of course, tried to fill the gaps from other sources. Though Ismailis no longer practise *taqiya* (disguise, dissimulation), they are reluctant to talk about many aspects of their highly esoteric religion, and even well educated Ismailis of the technological age continue the ancient tradition of secrecy. No secrecy attached to the Ismaili Constitution, of which copies were freely available.

Little of this emerges from the many works I have consulted though they have been of invaluable assistance in other respects. Professor Philip Hitti's 'History of the Arabs' was an indispensable introduction to the scene, Professor Bernard Lewis's 'Assassins' made fascinating and instructive reading. Without the (old) Aga Khan's *Memoirs*, discreet and reticent though they are, one could not have flavoured the story with his own reaction to many controversial incidents in his life.

Inevitably, I have soaked up a large measure of information from the biographies of the old Aga Khan by my friends, Stanley Jackson (particularly good on the racing activities of this prince of the British turf) and Harry Greenwall. Prince Aly Khan was such a flamboyant figure of our time, he obviously stimulated his biographers. British author and journalist Gordon Young, with his intimate knowledge of Aly's social environment, has followed his course closely, and, more recently, the American Leonard Slater has published a special study of Aly's love life. The French model Bettina, who might have become Aly's third wife had he lived longer, has written memoirs and elucidated many points for me in personal conversation.

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The lives of my three principal characters have almost become public property. Press, newsreels and television attended at many spectacular occasions and have contributed vivid eye-witness accounts. As a newspaperman, I make no apology for consulting the files of editorial offices in Africa and on the Indian sub-continent, in Britain, France, Germany and the United States. A number of people, Ismailis and non-Ismailis, who supplied me with information have stipulated that they should remain anonymous. Their help was appreciated for all that.

Those who have helped me are altogether too numerous for individual enumeration. Librarians in four continents have been generous with their time and advice. I was going to conclude this list of grateful acknowledgements with the usual reference to 'my wife's invaluable help, etc. etc.'. This would be grossly inadequate. Without her assistance in every department of a writer's endeavour, this book could not have been attempted; it would certainly not have been completed.

WILLI FRISCHAUER

London, 1970

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CHAPTER I

FOR Dar-es-Salaam, October 19, 1957, was a public holiday. Houses were decorated, streamers with messages of welcome spanned the streets, front page reports described the scene. The city was in a festive mood. Indigenous East Africans as well as Asians joined in the celebrations. The Muslims of the world-wide, influential, prosperous Shia Ismaili Community, some 20,000 of them from all over Tanganyika, were in town to acclaim their new spiritual leader. They were attending the *Takht Nishini*, the ceremonial installation of His Highness Prince Aga Khan IV Shah Karim al-Huseini, twenty-year-old direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed and the late Aga Khan's grandson and successor, as Imam-e-Zaman (Imam of the Present Time), forty-ninth in the line which started with Caliph and Imam Hazrat Mowla Murtaza Ali, husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatima.

From early morning people made their way to the Upanga ceremonial area which was soon packed to bursting point. Exhausted but excited, one group—a thousand men, women and children—tumbled from twenty lorries which had taken three days and three nights to bring them from the Southern Province to Dar-es-Salaam. Nothing short of disaster would have kept them away and they were only just in time to join in the shouts of '*Nalle Tagbir ! Nalle Tagbir !*'—May Allah bless you—which greeted the arrival of the young Imam. Dressed in a white, high-necked *sherwani*, black trousers and astrakhan hat, the slim new leader mounted the dais and settled himself in the heavy ornamental chair. His fixed smile barely disguised the tension and the deep emotion in his eyes as the waves of applause welled up to him.

The Dar-es-Salaam *Takht Nishini*, first of a number of similar



ceremonies to be held in East Africa and the Indian sub-continent, was a public pageant, a social occasion but, above all, a religious service which emphasised the living Imam's link with the Prophet and Hazrat Ali: unlike other Shia Muslims, Ismailis believe in a living, hereditary Imam as the vicar of Allah on earth. Devout Muslims, theirs is an esoteric but progressive, enlightened philosophy, a combination of deep spiritual fervour with a highly developed business sense. They rely on the guidance of a divinely inspired Imam in close touch with modern developments in every sphere of human endeavour whom they follow and obey without demur.

The new Imam was deeply conscious of the reason why, to the surprise of many, his grandfather had chosen him as his successor by *nass* (divine ordination, absolute will). As the old Aga Khan had said in his Will: 'In view of the fundamentally altered conditions in the world in the very recent years due to the great changes which have taken place, including the discoveries of atomic science, I am convinced that it is in the interest of the Shia Muslim Ismaili community that I should be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up . . . in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office as Imam.' Already the descendant of the Prophet was being hailed as the Imam of the Atomic Age.

Nothing could have been further from the atomic age than Dar-es-Salaam at this moment. Thousands of Ismailis who could find no seats squatted on the sandy ground. Babies slept soundly in their mothers' arms while bigger children played hide-and-seek among the crowd. In the gaily festooned grandstands, leaders of the Ismaili community in their high turbans and crimson robes looked as colourful as their womenfolk in flowing saris of a hundred shades, lavishly embroidered with gold and silver thread and sparkling diamanté. The gowns of European women brought a whiff of Paris haute couture to the Upanga Road. For the British government, the Colonial Secretary, Mr Alan Lennox-Boyd (now Lord Boyd), was there to pay his respects to the new Aga Khan; the Governor of Tanganyika and his lady headed a large official party. Prince Seyyid Abdulla, bringing the felicitations of his father, the Sultan of Zanzibar, was one of the many African nobles present.

Many eyes wandered from the solemn and lonely figure on the



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dais to the grandstand and the small group of the Imam's relatives who included the Mata Salamat, Ismaili title of Yvette Blanche Labrousse, the late Aga Khan's stately French-born Begum, and Karim's parents, Prince Aly Khan and Princess Joan, a daughter of Lord Churston who had adopted the Ismaili name of Tajudowleh. The sophisticated, elegant trio gave no hint of the strains—personal, religious, constitutional—which tested their nerves. Nothing was allowed to dim the glory of the new Imam in this great hour. Presently the noise subsided and the recitation from the Koran was intoned. Everybody rose—including the Imam—and listened intently, after which the leaders of the community approached to play their part in the ceremonial investiture, an ancient ritual of historic symbolism which signified the succession.

As the Imam held out his hand, a signet ring was placed on his finger. Throughout Ismaili history the ring's large engraved stone served as a seal of communication from Imams to their followers, particularly between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and whenever they were forced to live in concealment. But even in recent times it has been used to testify to the Imam's authority among followers in Afghanistan, Turkistan and other countries who were not prepared to rely on the Imam's signature without additional proof of authenticity. In the next stage of the ceremony, the Robe was placed on the shoulders of Prince Karim—it was the same his grandfather had worn at the Diamond Jubilee in 1946. The *Pagrina* (turban) was put on his head and the historic Chain was draped around his neck, each of its forty-nine links representing one Imam, the last bearing his own crest. Finally, he was handed the same curved Sword of Justice which had already symbolised the installation of his predecessor in 1885 as the authentic 'Defender of the Faith'.

The spiritual successor of his ancestor, the Prophet, His Highness Aga Khan IV was now truly installed. As he said on one occasion: 'Since my grandfather, the late Aga Khan, died, I have been the bearer of the *Noor*, which means Light and has been handed down in direct descent from the Prophet.' He was the Imam of the Ismailis.

★ ★ ★

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The Imam of the Ismailis!

Tradition, history, geography invest the office of the Imam with a significance beyond anything the western mind can easily accept. To hundreds of thousands, to millions the Imam is King, High Priest, Supreme Judge. Not even royalty is subjected to such uninhibited adoration as the Imam. A collection of 'significant utterances and writings' of the previous Aga Khan is introduced with a panel which says:

THE AGA KHAN

Direct descendant of the Prophet of Allah, Imam and dictator de facto, whose word is Law to many millions of Muslims . . . A Prince and a Lawgiver.

Writing in 'The Fatimid Theory of State', P. J. Vatikiotis, a student of Ismaili history, says: 'The Imam is not a mere temporal executive enforcing the sacred law among the Community of believers and adjudicating their disputes. He is rather an heir to the Prophet's "ministry" and a proof of God on earth. As the rightful heir to the prophetic mission, he possesses and knows the esoteric meaning of the "Book" and its interpretation. Thus, the Imam rules and guides in the name of God . . . the Imam has prophetic attributes which are transmitted to his lawful heir and successor . . . All Imams in succession are the Light of God.'

Bernard Lewis, Professor of the History of the Near and Middle East at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, writes about the cult of holy men and Imams who were believed to possess miraculous powers: 'The Imam is central to the Ismaili system—of doctrine and of organisation, of loyalty and of action. The Imams . . . descendants of Ali and Fatima through Isma'il were divinely inspired and infallible—in a sense indeed themselves divine . . . fountainheads of knowledge and authority—of the esoteric truths that were hidden from the uninformed and of commands that required total and unquestioning obedience.'

To his followers, Prince Karim is 'Hazar Imam' (Imam who is Present, Imam of our Time) or 'Imam-e-Zaman'. Some address him as 'Mowlana' (My Lord) or 'Khudavind' which means the same. Others call him 'Hazar Jomejo Dhani' (Present Holder of the



Mantle), 'Dhani Salamat Dani' (The Master who is Alive), 'Shah Pir' (Great Lord).

'My duties are wider than those of the Pope', the previous Aga Khan said when he was asked how his position compared with that of the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Church: 'The Pope is only concerned with the spiritual welfare of his flock, the Imam looks after his Community's temporal and spiritual interests.' I asked Prince Karim Aga Khan for an authentic definition: 'It is difficult to define the position of the Imam,' he answered, 'and I have never done so in public.' He thought a while and went on: 'You look after the Community's spiritual and temporal interests—after their temporal interests only as far as you are capable. But a member of the Community need not accept temporal guidance if he does not wish to. It is not an obligation. If he turns to the Imam for assistance, it will be given as far as possible but if the Imam's advice on temporal matters is rejected, no religious sanctions follow.' His advice is sought on many personal matters and no loyal Ismaili would dream of disregarding it. That the Imam's 'Holy Firman' (Formal Pronouncement) on any subject should be disobeyed is inconceivable.

When Prince Karim's predecessor was asked where the Aga Khan's followers were to be found he smiled and replied: 'Everywhere, except Dozakh'—everywhere except Hell.

They number some twenty million and, apart from their strongholds in Pakistan, India and East Africa, live in such remote places as the peaks of the Pamirs and the plains of China and Russia. The ruler of the mountain state of Hunza and most of his people are Ismailis. In Syria, Ismailis form a strong minority, in Persia they are known as Aga Khanis, in Afghanistan as Alillahis, in Central Asia as Maulais and in Indo-Pakistan as Khojas, Shamsis, Naosaris and Guptis. Burma, Japan and Madagascar also have Ismailis. Some live in Britain, France and the United States.

To invoke the name of the Imam is common usage: 'With the Imam's guidance . . .' Ismailis say frequently. But I have also heard immensely wealthy and sophisticated Ismaili industrialists in Africa, India and Pakistan say humbly and sincerely: 'What I have I owe to the help and guidance from Imam-e-Zaman'. Many Ismailis, including those educated in the West, implore the Aga Khan to



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accept a share in their business because they are convinced that they will prosper if the Imam supports them—and they usually do. A young Ismaili graduate in an important position in a Commonwealth organisation whom I asked to tell the Aga Khan of our conversation replied: ‘Of course, of course—but, being the Imam, he will know anyway.’

★ ★ ★

The Aga Khan’s Paris house by the Seine, a converted old monastery on the Ile de la Cité, stands in a narrow street which runs alongside the Quai aux Fleurs but on a much lower level. From the Quai a few steps go down to the street below and on the other side, a few steep steps up, is the ornate wooden door. Strong and solid, as if hewn out of rock, the building once belonged to the Notre-Dame complex and was later occupied by a Count Orsini from whom the street takes its name. It is like a medieval castle behind a protective moat but the butler in the white coat who answers the bell restores a sense of the twentieth century. The hall is gloomy, daylight hardly penetrates the small windows, and no more than a hint of the sun percolates to the courtyard, with the flower beds around an ancient fountain. Except for the distant murmur of a few words in Urdu, the silence is unbroken and the spiral stone staircase seems to wind its way up into another world.

Instead it leads to the Aga Khan’s study, Gobelins on the walls, a desk at the far end, a table covered with documents, copies of East African newspapers (his own) on the windowsill, large easy chairs. A fortnight later, the desk is missing, the furniture has been rearranged, the documents have disappeared: ‘Things are changed around frequently’ says an associate. When the Aga Khan enters, it is with a burst of youthful but well-controlled energy. He wears a sober dark suit, white shirt and an unobtrusive tie. He looks elegant whatever he wears, rather like an English squire who sports his shabbiest jacket during weekends on his estate. His mother says that it is a job to get him to buy a new suit, and friends have noticed holes in the soles of his shoes. One of them says: ‘The Aga Khan wears a French smile and English socks’—not a bad combination.

When he talks, expressive hands underline his words, idiomatic



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French phraseology supplements a rich English vocabulary which sometimes betrays a Harvard flavour. Without sounding too harsh, he is precise and definite like someone who is not accustomed to being contradicted. The dark eyes in his oval face are questing, attentive and sympathetic when he listens but sometimes narrow into a distant look which almost removes him from immediate reach. He laughs easily and has gleaming white teeth which show up against the slightly swarthy skin, the only physical evidence of his oriental extraction. The receding hairline adds years to his appearance.

At thirty-two, he is much more handsome than his famous grandfather who made the name Aga Khan an international household word. Child of a less picturesque era he disdains old-fashioned flamboyance, is studious, serious-minded, dedicated; neither does he exude the infectious dare-devil joie de vivre—on horseback, behind the wheel, on the dance floor—which, even in his middle age, endeared his father Prince Aly Khan as much to western socialites as to the Bedouins of the Syrian mountains. Prince Karim shuns the limelight and belongs to the age of anonymous technocrats and accountants into which he was born. His restraint and reticent manner owe something to his Anglo-Saxon heritage.

The impression he creates is inevitably coloured by the implications of his direct descent from the Prophet and his complicated genealogy which combines the Syrian, Egyptian, Persian and Indian blood of his male ancestors with the varying background of their consorts—high-born oriental women, slave girls of Christian or Jewish descent, widows of conquered foes, Middle Eastern, North African, Spanish. He has inherited the contemporary European element from his Italian grandmother and from his mother whose line goes back to the English King Edward III (1327–1377).

Following the precedent set by Queen Victoria, who honoured his grandfather, Queen Elizabeth II of England conferred the style of 'Highness' on the young Aga Khan, and this is how most people address him. Among themselves, his collaborators refer to him as 'H.H.' (His Highness) or 'The Prince'. East of Suez, as a descendant of the Persian Kajar dynasty, he is invariably addressed as 'Royal Highness'. Prince Karim enjoys the nationalities of three



countries, Britain, Iran and, of course, Pakistan, which counts his grandfather among its founders.

More than any Habsburg archduke, Hohenzollern prince or Bourbon pretender I know—and their roots go back almost as far in history—this scion of an august tribe remains linked to his origin. It is difficult to define. The closer one is to him the more apparent it becomes. Not long ago in Nairobi I compared notes with Michael Curtis, the former London editor who served the Aga Khan as an aide in 1957 and ran a multi-million East African publishing enterprise controlled by him: 'He mystifies me as much now,' Curtis confessed, 'as he did when I first met him more than ten years ago. He is not English, not American'—a reference to the Aga Khan's years at Harvard University. 'More than with any other member of his family, there is about him an element of the East . . .'

His complex personality is not easy to penetrate. He is proud and humble, friendly and magisterial at the same time. As a religious leader, he is not unlike Billy Graham with his streamlined sermonising. Privately, he has a combination of qualities rare in a very rich young man—he is intelligent, erudite, moral and charming. From the study he takes me across the landing to the spacious drawing-room with the antique chess table by the door, deep settees and high fireplace. Only a meticulous, pedantically rigid schedule enables the Aga Khan to cope with the constant stream of people who are anxious to see him, leaders of the Ismaili community from Asia and Africa whose appointments were fixed many months earlier, industrial and finance executives from half a dozen countries and legal experts who deal with his international interests.

One delegation from Karachi waiting to be admitted has come to consult him on a major educational project he has initiated in Pakistan, one of the numerous colleges, schools and orphanages which he sponsors wherever Ismailis dwell. They are voluntary workers and make the trip to Europe at their own expense. The Aga Khan greets 'his spiritual children' (many of them twice his age), accepts their homage, quickly puts them at ease with the trained monarch's knack of remembering names and circumstances of his flock. With the help of an *aide mémoire* which has reached him ahead of the delegation's arrival he discusses the problem, and



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presently gives proof of his astonishing versatility when, an hour later, the Pakistani Ismailis are followed by architects who have come to discuss highly technical plans for a big new housing project in East Africa.

In the last two years matters requiring his personal attention have become so numerous that it was physically no longer possible to deal with them in his private residence. He took offices near by where one English and two French secretaries deal with the voluminous correspondence. For secretarial work immediately connected with the Ismaili community he largely relies on Guli Noorali who is Ismaili and is married to Monsieur Robert Muller, who manages his French stud farms (Lassy, Marly la Ville, Saint Crespin and Bonneval) with Madame J. J. Vuillier, widow of the old Aga Khan's racing expert.

* * *

The engine of the Aga Khan's private *Mystère* jet (since replaced by a Grumman Gulfstream which has a longer range) started with a low whine which rose to a penetrating scream as it took off to carry him to England. With him was Robert Muller. Their destination was the English racing town of Newmarket where Major Cyril Hall joined the party—Major Hall manages the Aga Khan's Irish studs, Giltown, Sallymount, Sheshoon and Ballymann. Four top-class stallions and some eighty equally prestigious brood mares add up to a formidable establishment.

In 1960, the death of his father Prince Aly Khan, whose chief hobby in life was racing and horses, left Prince Karim in control of the studs about which he knew very little and did not seem to care much. As a boy he used to stay frequently with his father on one of the Irish farms: 'The first time my father put me on a horse I fell off,' he recalled, 'and I haven't been much interested in horses since.' But those who thought that he would quickly liquidate the famous racing empire did not realise his loyalty to the old family tradition which started with his great-great-grandfather. The first Aga Khan owned three hundred fine horses but it was the third Aga Khan who made his name and horse-racing virtually synonymous and became the English turf's most prominent figure in the

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inter-war years. The only man to win the English Derby five times, he headed the list of winning owners in England seven times. Karim would not in any case bring such a rare success story to a sudden end but, while he was contemplating what to do with the horses, one of them, Charlottesville, won two major prizes of the French turf, the Jockey Club and the Grand Prix de Paris at Longchamps, the latter worth 404,814 New Francs (about 85,000 dollars).

It was like a sign from heaven. The Aga Khan decided to carry on and began to acquaint himself thoroughly with the intricacies of racing and breeding. In 1965 he engaged François Mathet, a strict disciplinarian and probably the best trainer in Europe: 'I made up my mind to run the studs and the racing not as a hobby but as a business,' the Aga Khan told me shortly after the Newmarket expedition. He devoted himself to the task with his usual thoroughness, reorganised the administration of the whole establishment, introduced modern accountancy methods, and difficult as it was to reconcile his methodical approach with a sport with so many imponderables, has kept a wary eye on the balance sheets ever since.

From this point of view his trip to Newmarket was a most satisfying experience. The Newmarket December Sales are a major event in the racing world and 1968 promised to surpass the record turnover of 1964 when over two million guineas (over 5 million dollars) changed hands at the public auction. Although the biggest names in racing were present, many eyes were on the Aga Khan and his advisers. As usual, he was on the look-out for suitable horses to buy but everybody else was more interested in what the Aga Khan had to sell. He prunes his studs four times a year to make room for new foals, and so four times a year his surplus horses are offered for sale. This time, the most useful of his batch was Atrevida, a ten-year-old grey mare, bred under Colonel Vuillier's unique points system from an ancestry which included Blenheim, the old Aga's 1930 Derby winner. Atrevida, in foal to his stallion Silver Shark, the descendant of his grandfather's 1936 Derby winner Mahmoud, fetched 31,000 guineas (78,500 dollars) to become the highest priced brood mare of the whole Sale. The nine mares and fillies which the Aga Khan brought to Newmarket realised a grand total of 106,700 guineas (268,900 dollars). Sales from the studs bring the Aga Khan nearly half a million pounds sterling a year but some-



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times he has qualms about the cost of his private aircraft: 'I wonder whether it is not too spectacular,' he said. Considering that his racing establishment alone is worth around £3 million and represents only a fraction of his investments which keep him travelling all over the world, the question, though sincerely put, answers itself.

* * *

'Merimont', next door to the famous Château Voltaire, is a charming little villa in its own grounds on the outskirts of Geneva, and looks like a rich man's retreat. The lovingly tended gardens, the parquet floors, the elegant staircase reinforce the impression which is only corrected by the big baize-covered conference table in the ground-floor drawing-room. Known as 'Le Bureau du Dr Hengel' (after the German industrial expert who presides over it), 'Merimont' is the nerve centre of the Aga Khan's industrial empire, a unique head office which does not serve a corporation or a holding company but is adapted to the peculiar position of the Aga Khan as head of a religious community and independent millionaire industrialist.

One characteristic common to most of his ventures is that he rarely concerns himself with enterprises which have no social purpose and from which the Ismaili community does not benefit either directly or indirectly. The emphasis is on tourism and half a dozen related enterprises, industrial promotion in seven or eight largely underdeveloped countries (cotton, jute, textiles, marble, ceramics, cosmetics, pharmaceutical products, clothes, household utensils), real estate in Europe and overseas, publishing in East Africa, banks, finance, investment, insurance institutes and co-operatives in Africa and on the Indian sub-continent. With the community schools, hospitals, health centres and religious institutions they add up to an empire believed to be worth 300 million dollars which is under the control but not necessarily wholly owned by the Aga Khan.

Sitting in his ground-floor office at 'Merimont' with the bamboo-rimmed desk, the big green plants and the huge glass frontage, the Aga Khan looks out on the lawn, the bed of tulips—and Mont Blanc in the distance. His small flat upstairs is discreetly furnished but has a rather spectacular bathroom: 'Not really his style,' says an

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aide, 'it was already here when the house was acquired in the early sixties.' The Aga Khan's brains-trust working in these civilised surroundings and assisted by a dozen multi-lingual secretaries includes two Swiss experts on hotels, tourism and technical projects, two British (finance and marketing), and two Germans (one engineer, one economist). Italians, Frenchmen, others are co-opted as the need arises. Towards the end of 1968, they were joined by the Aga Khan's younger brother Prince Ayn (Harvard 1964, United Nations) whose first assignments were to deal with the big new tourist projects in East Africa and to arrange for an investigation into agricultural opportunities for Ismailis. As a member of the family, Prince Ayn is an invaluable link between the Imam and Ismaili leaders.

Because of his many industrial interests and his preoccupation with the education, housing and health of the Community involving major projects which depend on organization, technology and finance, the Aga Khan sometimes seems more like a business tycoon than a religious leader. He is aware of this but explains: 'Islam is concerned with the whole life of the faithful, not only their religion . . . The Prophet, too, was a business man.'

★ ★ ★

'Ski-ing,' says the Aga Khan, 'is ideal for taking one's mind off affairs.' Total concentration on the sport is what attracts him. A winter sports enthusiast of Olympic standards, he spends the winter months in the Swiss Alps. He used to own a house in Gstaad (where he went to school at the famous Le Rosay college) but sold it in 1968 and rented a chalet in St Moritz from the Greek shipowner Stavros Niarchos while making up his mind to build a house of his own. His staff is with him and associates come for meetings but Ismaili leaders, by silent agreement, try not to burden their Imam with community affairs during the month of February which gives him a respite but doubles his work in the following month.

Last winter, rising early, he was out on the stiffest ski runs every morning between eight and eleven and when his half-sister Yasmin (daughter of Aly Khan and Rita Hayworth) came on a visit took her out ski-ing for an hour or so after that whenever the weather per-



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mitted. Back in Paris for a few days, he made one of his rare visits to a night-club, taking Yasmin and a small party of friends dining and dancing. Work and sport added up to a very full life. The Aga Khan recalled what his grandfather once told him: 'Life is a wonderful mission which you should not shy away from. Do not refuse to accept the joys or the responsibilities!' Prince Karim said he tried to apply this philosophy with a certain integrity but on closer acquaintance it seems that he inclines more towards the responsibilities than the joys.

★ ★ ★

In or out of season, the Aga Khan is liable to make a flying visit to Sardinia almost any time of the year. It is no secret—on the contrary: it has been well publicised—that he is associated with the development of the Costa Smeralda as an élite holiday resort comparable with the Côte d'Azur, and is manifestly succeeding. Until 1969, there were no landing facilities for his *Mystère* on the Costa Smeralda and he had to break the journey in Corsica where he transferred to his helicopter for the last stage of the trip. Now Olbia airport has been extended to take the biggest aircraft, a new airport is being built and he can fly straight to his own strip of coast.

While he is there, his white villa overlooking the sea at Porto Cervo becomes the centre of a great deal of activity, a suite in the Hotel Cervo serves him as an office and the secretaries with their bundles of correspondence are never far away. But he is more relaxed in Sardinia than in almost any other place and in the summer months entertains friends—Britain's Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon among them—while others have bought villas forming the nucleus of an international Aga Khan set.

A typical pre-season visit in 1969 was to attend a week's intensive conferences of the Costa Smeralda Comitato Diretivo, consisting of himself, Maître Ardoin and Dr Hengel—Ardoin and Hengel also own villas on the Costa Smeralda. About 9 a.m. each morning, the Aga Khan, in slacks and short-sleeved shirt, walked from his villa across the piazza to the conference room in one of the new buildings. (Over longer distances he often drives himself in his small red Volkswagen.) After listening to the reports of his fellow directors—



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his symmetric, harmonious doodles reflect his orderly mind—he asked questions, checked and counter-checked facts and figures. As usual he was thorough, interested in details, persistent and difficult to convince but quick to approve once he saw the merits of a scheme. With short breaks for lunch the committee usually worked till 7 p.m., reviewed an urban master plan for the Costa Smeralda prepared by an American expert, examined a new Mediterranean villa design with twenty-six variations and checked the budget of the Port of Porto Cervo corporation and the records of their tile factory in Olbia.

More diverting was their inspection of the new eighteen-hole golf-course designed by U.S. golf-architect Trent Jones which stretches from sea to sea across the neck of Sardinia. Back in their conference room the Aga Khan and his two fellow directors dealt with the inquiries in response to their international advertising campaign for the sale of plots which promised flourishing business. They were talking about structural changes in the hotels and a new heated swimming pool when a telex message from East Africa required their immediate attention. Their Sardinian business was once more interrupted when a high executive of the International Finance Corporation was flown in from Milan for discussions on another proposition.

As he crossed the square at Porto Cervo, the Aga Khan was recognised by tourists who take a possessive interest in his activities. They remarked how well he looked and what a wonderful time he must be having.

* * *

Because of his extreme reticence few people are aware of the Aga Khan's world-wide activities. He is on friendly terms with many royal rulers and heads of state, particularly the Shah of Persia who is a Shia Muslim like him. He has been received by United States Presidents and frequently meets leaders of the British Commonwealth. He enjoys the fatherly friendship and respect of Kenya's President Yomo Kenyatta to whom he gave the fine Aga Khan Bungalow in Nairobi in which he, Prince Karim, spent his childhood during the Second World War.



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Unobtrusively and almost unnoticed, he flew into London in mid-January 1969 while the Commonwealth Conference was in session to discuss the difficulties of Asians in East Africa with African delegates. As the Aga Khan had instructed Ismailis of Asian origin in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda—in all emergent states—to adopt the nationality of the country in which they lived (a policy inaugurated by his grandfather), his followers were the least affected by xenophobic measures in East Africa, while Asians with British passports were deprived of their livelihood and yet refused admission to Britain.

A few months before attending the Mahatma Gandhi centenary celebrations in India in March of the same year, the Aga Khan presented Yarovda Palace in Poona, jointly owned by him, his brother and his half-sister, to the Indian nation as a gesture of goodwill. Said to be worth about £1 million (2.4 million dollars) it was built by his grandfather in 1897 to provide work for starving Indians during the famine and to relieve distress caused by the plague. In 1942, it was put at the disposal of Mahatma Gandhi when the British authorities decided to detain him, and the Mahatma, his wife, his secretary (and his goats) were held there instead of being sent to near-by Yarovda prison. Mrs Gandhi died while under detention in the palace and to avoid a public funeral which might have sparked off serious unrest was committed to the pyre and the ashes buried in the grounds: 'The Yarovda Palace,' the Aga Khan said, 'is now, as it should be, a national monument in memory of one of the great citizens of the world.'

The crisis in Pakistan, aggravated by the dissatisfaction in the East with a government rooted in the wealthier but less populous western wing of the country, created problems for the Aga Khan's followers who are prominent in the business community, but Pakistan, too, was a good example of his astonishingly far-sighted policies. From the beginning he had supported industrial development in East Pakistan and backed it with considerable personal funds.

As always, it was difficult to keep track of his movements. Apart from commuting between Paris, Geneva, St Moritz and Sardinia (with a wary eye on the repercussions of recurrent financial crises in Europe), the Aga Khan visited the United States twice that year



and came to London several times to attend business conferences—and the Derby. In London, until recently, he occupied an apartment in his mother's residence—his line drawings on the wall and a head sculpted by him testify to an unsuspected talent. He also maintains homes in St Crespian and in the South of France, on his Irish stud farms and in Karachi. The houses of wealthy followers in Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Kampala, in Egypt and Iran, wherever they are, are available to him at any time. His legal residence is Switzerland.

★ ★ ★

Not many years before his death, the grandfather of the present Aga Khan seriously considered the possibility of acquiring enough land to restore territorial autonomy to his family. Although eventually abandoned, the idea serves as a dramatic flashback to the amazing history of his ancestors over the past thirteen centuries, to the very beginning of Islam where his forebear, the Prophet Mohammed, conquered the minds of men with his teaching and laid the foundation of a state based on the religion of Islam; to the rise and fall of the illustrious Fatimid caliphs who founded Cairo and ruled over a powerful empire stretching from the River Oxus in the East across North Africa and Morocco in the West.

Visions of the legendary 'Old Man of the Mountain' and his 'Assassins' who struck terror—and daggers—into the hearts of their foes are followed by glimpses of the period when Imams and their followers lived behind the mask of *taqiya*, denying or disguising their true religious beliefs. Presently they emerge as Persian noblemen and here, quite recently in history, is the first Aga Khan in close liaison with the ruling house of Persia. Through triumph and tribulation, in victory and defeat, millions of Ismailis remained loyal to the Imam of the time, paying *zakat*, their voluntary offering. (According to one account members of an Ismaili community out of touch with Imam still wrap their offerings in handkerchiefs every month and throw them into the Oxus but the Aga Khan says the story is not true.)

This great line is rich in eminent men who have left their mark on the history of their time but when I asked the Aga Khan with which of his ancestors he felt the strongest communion his answer



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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was prompt: 'The life of the Prophet,' he said, 'is my main inspiration. One can study it all one's life and never grasp the full extent even though the guide lines of his life are fundamental. The same applies to Hazrat Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and founder of the Shia branch . . .' And what might he have in common with Ali? 'It is the personal approach to the practice of Islam, the degree of personal involvement which is of fundamental significance for Shia Islam. The Prophet and Hazrat Ali gave a spiritualistic approach to Islam which tends to involve the Shia more intimately.'

In the setting of the elegant drawing-room of his house on the Ile de la Cité in Paris, His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shah Karim al-Huseini, Hazar Imam and highest religious authority of twenty million Muslims of the Shia Ismaili community, went back to the origin of the faith of which he is the living symbol. With an intensity which mostly remains below the surface and is hardly suspected by his western associates, he conjured up the world of the Prophet Mohammed and Hazrat Ali, the two great historic figures whose blood flows in his veins.



CHAPTER II

‘Everything connected with Ismailism seems to be enveloped in a cloud of mystery and secrecy.’

Asaf A. A. Fyzee

THE story of the Aga Khan and his Ismailis starts in the sixth century of the Christian era in the desolate Bedouin country of al-Hijaz by the Red Sea which was only sparsely inhabited by Yemenite and Jewish tribes and a few Christians. Trading caravans trundling through the desert along the ‘spice route’ to Syria deposited seeds of Byzantine, Aramaean and Persian influences in this lonely land whose main population centres were the cities of Makkah (Mecca) where Mohammed was born around A.D. 571 and Yathrib which, when he moved there, became al-Madinah (Medina), the City of the Prophet.

The early history of Islam is a family affair, though not a happy one, a power struggle of closely related contenders. The Quraysh, Mecca’s leading family, were the guardians of Ka’bah, shrine of the pagan idols; Mohammed’s father Abdullah belonged to the Hashim, a minor branch of the tribe. The Umayyads and Abbasides who emerged as temporal rulers of the Muslim empire all spring from the same source.

Mohammed, who lost father and mother when still very young, was brought up by his grandfather and later his uncle abu-Talib whose son Ali became his closest companion and earliest follower. Ali is the hero of the Aga Khan’s Muslim sect. Young Mohammed accompanied his uncle’s caravans to Syria, then went to work for Khadija, a wealthy Quraysh widow, and looked after her business and her caravans so well that she offered him her hand in marriage. She was forty and he was twenty-five but their married life was



happy and while she lived Mohammed looked at no other woman. They had three sons who died in infancy, and four daughters, one of whom, Fatima, survived, married cousin Ali and entered the pages of history. It is through Fatima that the Aga Khan traces his descent to the Prophet of Islam.

While continuing to trade, Mohammed spent many hours in meditation in a cave on a hill near Mecca where, in A.D. 610, he had the first of the revelations of 'God's scriptures dictated by Arch-angel Gabriel as guidance to men'. This was the 'Night of Power', the birth of Islam, and from then on, Muslims believe, the voice of Allah continued to speak through the Prophet. The result was the Koran which did for Mohammed (through his own words) what the Bible did for Christ but which is supplemented by *hadith* (tradition) handed down by word of mouth.

Like Jesus Christ in his time, the Prophet inveighed against false pagan idols, preached belief in One God, in Resurrection, in the Last Judgement and in Paradise. But the essence of his teaching was Surrender to the Will of God—the word 'Islam' derived from *aslama* which means 'to submit'. Like Jesus Christ he was violently attacked by the establishment. The Quraysh saw in him a threat to their vested interests in Mecca as a centre of pagan worship, persecuted his followers and drove many of them into exile.

Mohammed's closest associates rallied around him, foremost among them Ali, his son-in-law, and abu-Bakr, a prosperous merchant, Umar, a late convert who became known as the 'St Paul of Islam' and Uthman, a member of the Umayyad family. For a time the Prophet weathered the storm but soon after his wife Khadija died he left the city of his birth and took the road to Medina. The date was September 24, A.D. 622, the celebrated *Hijra* (Hegira) which has been translated as 'flight' but was a well prepared migration. The 'Year of the Farewell' was later adopted as the beginning of the Muslim era, Anno *Hijra* (A.H.).

For Mohammed and his Muslims it was a watershed because Medina acknowledged him not only as a religious leader but as head of their community. As a statesman the Prophet earned a reputation for his wisdom, humanity and kindness, but he and his Muslims entered upon a period in which Mecca and Medina, Muslims and pagan Arabs, Muslims and Jews were locked in one



unending battle. Reports of the Prophet's bloody wars and victories alternate with accounts of his inspired preaching and the new morality he laid down for his followers.

He built mosques and homes for the Muslims who joined him in Medina and his own house was surrounded by quarters for his ten or twelve wives. His favourite wife was abu-Bakr's daughter A'isha who was only eight or nine years old at the time of their marriage and took her dolls with her to the marital home.

In the many clashes with the Meccans and pagan tribes, Ali fought by the side of the Prophet with great courage, is said to have killed 523 men in one day and, on another occasion, to have put thirty-seven to death with his sabre. He was capable of severing a horseman's rump from the rest of his body with one stroke of the sword, the lower part remaining on the horse. Victory in one battle ('with the help of Allah') was followed by defeat in another in which the Prophet was wounded.

While the Muslim warriors battled in the field, their women fought among themselves. A'isha supported her father's claim to be first among the Prophet's Companions (as the Mecca emigrants and their Medinese supporters were called). Fatima championed the cause of her husband. The two factions were on bad terms and when Ali accused A'isha of having deceived the Prophet with another man, the rift deepened. A'isha retaliated and missed no opportunity to denigrate Ali and Fatima. Talking about these early conflicts the Aga Khan said simply: 'The quarrel between Fatima and A'isha is a historical fact.' In effect it gave rise to the branch of Islam of which he is the head.

Mohammed extended the frontiers of Islam, subjugated many tribes, converted them or forced them to pay tribute. Others sent delegations to swear allegiance to the great leaders who changed the tribal society into which he was born into a state built on religion. Returning to Mecca, he smashed the pagan idols and preached the famous sermon: 'Know ye that every Muslim is a brother unto every Muslim, and that ye are now one brotherhood'—the Muslim Brotherhood is still a political force in the Middle East. He put the Ka'bah out of bounds to unbelievers and in the thirteen centuries that have passed only a handful of non-Muslims has visited it—and lived.

'I shall soon be called back to heaven,' the Prophet told his



followers, adding, 'I leave amongst you two important things . . . the Koran and my family.' The Muslims had heard him say that 'He, whose master I am, has also Ali for his master,' which Ismailis take to mean that he wanted Ali to become his successor. But when he fell ill and was too weak to lead the *salat* (prayers) he delegated the honour to abu-Bakr which was interpreted as a sign that abu-Bakr was his choice as deputy (*khalifa*) and successor. On June 8, A.D. 632 (A.H. 10), the Prophet of Allah reached the end of his road on earth and died leaving the succession in doubt.

It was at once fiercely contested by two factions, one favouring the staid, conservative abu-Bakr—and a caliphate based on the elective principle—the other rooting for Ali as the legitimate heir entitled to the succession as a member of the 'House of the Prophet' (his own description)—Mohammed, Fatima and Ali and their two sons, Hasan and Huseyn. The Companions opted for abu-Bakr who became the first of the 'orthodox caliphs' whose followers are described as Sunnis (for 'custom', 'dogma'). Ali's partisans, the legitimists, opposed the choice and formed the Shi'atu-Ali, Ali's Party, or 'Shia' for short, which developed into a political pressure group for the 'great society' envisaged by the Prophet and against the Muslim establishment of greed, privilege and injustice.

From this first split in Islam, Ali emerged as the leader of the Shias and the champion of the under-privileged. Today some twenty per cent of all Muslims are Shias; 'Sunnis and Shias do not differ about the basic tenets of Islam,' the Aga Khan explained when I mentioned the split but one does not have to study early Muslim history much further before it becomes complicated by dissensions among the Shias themselves from the first of which the Aga Khan's followers emerged as a separate sect.

Caliph abu-Bakr continued in the Prophet's footsteps and brought the whole of Arabia under the rule of Islam. His reign was brief. He was poisoned and died in the year A.D. 634. His successor, Caliph Umar, extended the Muslim dominion over Syria, Iraq and Persia in the north, Egypt and Tripoli in the west. He was only fifty-three when he fell to the dagger of a Christian who acted—certainties are hard to come by in this period—either in protest against high taxation or at the instigation of Companions who were tired of Umar's tyrannical régime.



Ali's followers pressed his claim of succession but a committee chose Uthman, the Umayyad, who made further conquests but could not control the provinces under his rule. He was accused of nepotism and of feathering his family's nest. There was a general uprising, angry opponents demanded his resignation and stormed his house. He was slain, it is said, by a son of abu-Bakr.

Uthman's murder marked the beginning of the internecine struggles which rent Islam for centuries but at long last opened the way for Ali. The Prophet's own family, the Aga Khan's ancestors, came into their own. In Sunni history, Ali ranks as the fourth caliph. Shias hail him as the first legitimate successor of the Prophet. The Caliph to whom the young Aga Khan feels such a strong affinity was a deeply pious and saintly man who frequently inflicted mortifications on himself. He was corpulent, short and bald but with a long white beard which he sometimes dyed red, had a handsome face, dark complexion and prominent eyes which looked disdainfully at the world: 'Whoever wants part of it,' he said, 'must be satisfied to live with dogs!' His thoughts were on Paradise, which awaits the devout Muslim: 'Blessed are those,' he said, 'who have renounced this world and only aspire to the world to come.'

Ali was so modest that he only reluctantly assumed his office as Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Armies) and Imam al-Moslemin (Leader of the Prayers). His dynamic, progressive view of Islam, his support for the underdog and unswerving loyalty to the ideas of the Prophet were challenged by rivals who set out to destroy him. At Basra, they fought the 'Battle of the Camel', A'isha making common cause with Ali's enemies and riding into battle with them on a camel. Ali won, captured A'isha and sent her back to Medina with an escort of forty noble women. His defeated enemies were killed but buried with military honours.

The victorious Caliph never returned to the City of the Prophet. He made al-Kufa by the Euphrates his capital city. The Umayyads accused him of complicity in the murder of Uthman and went to war against him and defeated him with a trick. He was deserted by many of his followers but might have prevailed, had he not been attacked by a rebel with a poisoned sword which penetrated his brain. The 'Wali Allah' (Friend of God) died on January 24, 661. Imam, warrior and saint he lives in Shia memory as the God-like,



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ideal Muslim—a Yemenite Jew is thought to have been the first to acclaim him with the words: 'Thou art God.' Ali was buried at Kufa which became the Holy City of the Shias, who still flock to it on the anniversary of his death.

After Ali's death, his empire crumbled. Egypt was lost to his supporters but Iraq remained loyal and proclaimed his son Hasan, elder of the Prophet's beloved grandsons, as Caliph. If his followers hoped that Imam Hasan would continue the struggle against the Umayyads they were disappointed. Ali's son preferred the pleasures of the harem to the rigours of battle, made and unmade a hundred marriages and earned himself the epithet of 'the great divorcer'. He abdicated and died in Medina—Sunnis say of consumption, but Shias believe he was the victim of an Umayyad plot and mourn him as a *shadid* (martyr). He remains under a historical cloud and Ismaili records of the forty-nine Imams from Ali to Karim do not include his name. His younger brother Huseyn succeeded him as Imam and Caliph of Iraq.

The battle with the Umayyads flared up again. Hoping for popular support, Huseyn crossed the desert with a small band of relatives but was cut off without access to the water of the Euphrates. At Kerbela, Imam Huseyn and his men were massacred. The date of the tragedy was 10th Muharram in the sixtieth year of the *Hijra*, a day of deep mourning for all Shias. They lost more than their Imam. With him they forfeited their political power and did not regain it for centuries. Fanatical Shias still celebrate the memory by flogging themselves with chains until their blood flows and attend a passion play commemorating his martyrdom.

Imam Huseyn's son, Ali Zayn al-Abedin who escaped unharmed from the death trap of Kerbela went to live in Medina where he was greatly respected as a religious leader. He and his successor were popular with the growing number of Muslims who opposed the ruling Umayyads. In A.D. 732, Jafar al-Sadiq became Imam and during his tenure Arab history—and the history of the Aga Khan's ancestors—took a dramatic turn. The rule of the Umayyads came to an end and a new dynasty assumed power. The Abbasides (descendants of al-Abbas, a brother of both Mohammed's and Ali's fathers) were, alas, no less hostile to Ali's heirs. Shias were cruelly persecuted and Jafar Sadiq's life was in constant danger.



To keep the line of the Imamatus unbroken and protect his eldest son and heir Ismail, Jafar Sadiq smuggled him out of the country spreading a rumour that Ismail had died and even staged a mock funeral. It caused a lot of confusion and when Jafar Sadiq was killed he left a new succession tangle behind. Ismail's younger brother Musa Kazim claimed to be the new Imam. Shias were in two minds. Some argued that Ismail was the rightful successor and swore allegiance to him. Others took the view that Ismail had died during his father's lifetime and accepted Musa Kazim as their new Imam.

The Shia community was split right down the middle. Musa Kazim functioned as Imam and his Imamatus came down in succession to his son and grandson until the twelfth in line, Mohammed Mahdi, who is said to have gone into concealment and for whose reappearance the *Ithna Ashari* ('Twelver Shias') are still waiting. This branch of the Shia faith became the official religion of Persia where the Shah is revered as the deputy of the Mahdi whose return is awaited.

Those who remained loyal to Ismail—'Ismailis'—were persecuted from all sides. Their support for Ismail was not only heresy in the eyes of the orthodox Sunni Muslims—it was also regarded as high treason. Their fellow Shias who supported Musa Kazim were no more kindly inclined towards them.

Driven underground, they practised their faith in secret, starting a tradition of secrecy which became second nature to all Ismailis and has survived to this day. Hiding their religious conviction—*taqiya* which means dissimulation or disguise—became a matter of life and death and permissible as a perfectly honourable practice. They even pretended to be orthodox Sunni Muslims. Imams themselves sometimes adopted the colouring of their mortal foes. Ismaili manuscripts were hidden away; when discovered, they were seized and destroyed by their opponents.

It was a long time before evidence in support of Ismaili claims came to the surface. But as new sources were uncovered, references to Ismail in old manuscripts showed that he survived his father by at least twenty years. He turned up in Basra where he was noticed because of his extraordinary powers to cure the sick. Hotly pursued by the Abbasside Caliph, he fled to Syria and escaped death only



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because the Governor of Damascus refused to arrest him and became his loyal follower.

In contrast with the 'Twelvers', Ismailis are frequently described as 'Seveners' (*Sabiya*) on the assumption that Ismail was the seventh Imam but authentic Ismaili records omit Imam Hasan from the list and the Ismailis never refer to themselves as 'Seveners'. The split between Ithna Ashari and Sabiya had not been healed but the two main Shia branches are no longer hostile and their leaders, the Aga Khan, heir to Ismail's Imam, and the Shah of Persia whose subjects are 'Twelvers', are on the friendliest terms.

Ismail himself remained in hiding throughout his Imam (A.D. 765-775) and neither he nor his successors could defend themselves against false accusations some of which are still in currency. According to Professor W. Ivanow, greatest western authority on Ismaili history, Sunni scholars recounted only what was derogatory about the hated Ismaili 'heretics' and claimed that Ismailism was a swindle on a grand scale and a malicious intrigue for the subversion of Islam.

This view has long lost all credibility. Ismailis, of course, believe that they are on the highest level of religious comprehension which is called *haqiqat*. Professor Bernard Lewis praises the unity and discipline which were forged in their secret work. Ismaili loyalty to the tradition and law of Islam, he says, was from the beginning allied to a philosophical interpretation of the faith and a strong, highly emotional approach. With great self-sacrifice Ismaili leaders championed the under-privileged and challenged the establishment.

Their followers met in secret lodges, novices were obliged to swear an oath of secrecy, initiation was by seven stages—the number seven acquired sacred importance—but the esoteric truth which reposed in the living Imam, descendant of the Prophet and God-inspired leader, was inaccessible to the ordinary man. When the Crusaders came in touch with Ismailis, they adopted the idea which gave birth to many religious and secular secret societies in Europe. The Knights Templar with their system of Grand Masters and religious devotees and degrees of initiation are reminiscent of Ismaili practices. Ismaili historians find analogies even with the Society of Jesus and its unsurpassed spirit of sacrifice and devotion. The Freemasons copied Ismaili lodges and initiation.



From Salamiyya in Syria where they settled, Ismaili Imams sent their *dais* (clerics) and missionaries to spread propaganda in distant lands. They became known as Fatimids, after the Prophet's daughter Fatima. Without revealing themselves as Imams, Ismail's successors secretly organised rebellions and struck at the Abbasides wherever they could. Their influence reached far into North Africa where they made contact with discontented elements and built up a well-organised Ismaili underground whose members recognised the Imam as undisputed leader and contributed to his exchequer in line with the practice of paying *zakat* (offerings, tithes) which dates back to the Prophet's *baitulmal* (treasury), figures in the Koran and, in a more sophisticated form, survives to this day.

These were the times of Harun al-Raschid, the Abbaside Caliph of the Arabian Nights, but romance and glamour took second place to bloody wars. The Abbasides harassed Jews, Christians and Shias alike, and razed Huseyn's mausoleum at Kerbela to the ground, but the Ismaili flame continued to burn and Fatimid propaganda made tremendous headway in North Africa. When Ubaydullah, the eleventh Imam of the Ismailis, followed in his missionaries' footsteps he was received as the long awaited Mahdi, adopted the name of Mahdi Mohammed and was proclaimed Caliph at Qayrawan. The descendants of Ali and Fatima, the forebears of the Aga Khan, were out of the shadows and in power once more entering the most glorious period in their history.

The enemies of the Ismailis were not inactive either and, to undermine the Caliph's authority, spread rumours which still find an echo in Sunni history books. It was suggested that he was descended from a Jew, and was not the real Imam at all. This is a recurring feature in the Aga Khan's genealogy. However, responsible historians acknowledge Mahdi Mohammed as the founder of the Fatimid empire, biggest of all Islamic kingdoms, which eventually included Morocco, Algeria, the whole of northern Africa and the greater part of Somaliland. It stretched to Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Sind in India. Fatimids ruled Sicily, Calabria and gained a foothold in Sardinia to which the young Aga Khan returned as the head of his tourist consortium.

Mahdi Mohammed's successors had their eyes on Egypt and built a formidable fleet. Fatimid admirals developed the techniques of



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attacking enemy ships with fire throwers which, Ismaili historians claim, the English employed five hundred years later when they routed the Spanish Armada. In A.D. 969 the Fatimid Caliph and Imam abu-Tamin Ma'add al-Moizz sent the commander of his forces, General Ghazi Jawarhar al-Siquilli (the Sicilian), to launch an attack on Egypt by land and by sea. Alexandria surrendered quickly but Fustat, the capital, refused to yield and Caliph Moizz instructed his General to build a new capital. Working from a sketch provided by Moizz himself, Jawarhar ordered a square of 1,200 yards to be pegged off with ropes to which bells were attached, and kept men with spades in readiness to begin work as soon as the signs were favourable, when the bells would be rung. But a raven settling on one of the ropes set the bells ringing and work on the city was started just when Mars (Al-Kahir) was in the ascendant. The city which rose was named Al-Kahira, city of Mars, which later became El-Cairo or Cairo.

Caliph Moizz, the Aga Khan's most imposing ancestor, entered his new capital in state and took up residence in a palace which accommodated all the members of his family, slaves, eunuchs and servants, numbering over twenty thousand. Moizz studied the world with the help of a map made of solid gold. One of his daughters was said to own 12,000 dresses and another five sacks of emeralds, vast quantities of other precious stones and many works of art. But amid all this splendour he ruled justly and introduced great reforms such as a system of land administration which curbed the powers and profits of the collectors. His right-hand man, Yakub b Killis, a Jewish convert to the Ismaili faith, survived him and founded the University of al-Azhar which is still the greatest seat of Islamic learning. Al-Azhar means 'the luminous', masculine version of the name by which Fatima was known.

Controversy blurs the history of Moizz's successors. Hakim was only eleven when he came to the throne, was said to be under the influence of the extremist Druzes and is blamed for provoking the Crusades. His enemies called him the 'Mad Caliph' but he enhanced Cairo's reputation as a centre of civilisation. Said Syeed Ali, 'When Europe was still in the dark ages, Ismailis had already built colleges and public libraries throughout their empire.' The gowns worn in English universities are copies of the Arabic Khala, first introduced

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in Fatimid colleges. In this period Ibn Yunis invented the pendulum, whilst other scholars greatly advanced medicine and other sciences. Hakim was murdered in A.D. 1020 but the Druzes believe that he will reappear one day.

His grandson, al-Mustansir, was only seven years when he assumed the mantle of the Caliph. No Imam in Ismaili history reigned as long as he—from 1035 to 1095—until nearly a thousand years later when the Aga Khan's grandfather improved on the record. In the wake of al-Mustansir's death, the succession was again disputed. The military opposed his elder son, Nizar, and supported the younger brother, Mustealli, whom the late Imam was said to have chosen by *nass* with his dying breath. Nizar was forced to flee but was captured by Mustealli's men who took him back to Cairo where he died in prison. It was put about that he left no heir, and one group of Shias, the Bohras, recognised Mustealli as Imam. They remained loyal to the line until his grandson became another 'last living Imam' whom the Bohras believe to be in concealment.

The main body of Ismailis acknowledged Nizar as their nineteenth Imam. Nizar's son Hadi, Ismaili sources have since shown, was arrested with his father but escaped and was hidden in Iraq—whereby hangs the tale of Hasan-i-Sabbah, one of the most fascinating figures of the epoch. Son of a Twelver Shi'ite from Kufa, Hasan was born around A.D. 1050, brought up at Rayy (Teheran) and became a convert to Ismailism. Around the time when William the Conqueror fought the Battle of Hastings, Hasan swore allegiance to the Imam of the Ismailis and decided to discover the Koran's innermost meaning at the fountainhead of Ismaili knowledge.

One of his fellow students was Omar Khayyám, another Nizam al-Mulk who fell out with him and produced a malicious account of his life and activities which Edward Fitzgerald quotes in the preface of his translation of *The Rubá'iyát*. Hasan was supposed to have become 'the head of the Persian sect of Ismailians, a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will', and to have seized the Castle of Alamut in the Province of Rudbar south of the Caspian Sea. Known to the Crusaders as 'The Old Man of the Mountain', Hasan was said to have spread terror through the Mohammedan world and left behind the word 'Assassin' as his dark memorial—it



is supposed to be derived either from hashish (opiate of hemp leaf, the Indian *bhang*) with which his followers maddened themselves to a sullen pitch of oriental desperation, or from Hasan's name.

No Ismaili would accept this story. Hasan-i-Sabah was neither the head of the Ismailis nor was he an Imam. After completing his studies he went out to spread a purist version of Fatimid philosophy in Persia and Syria, recruiting many followers. He finally chose the mountain-top fortress of Alamut ('Eagle's Nest') as a base and in the thirty-five years which remained of his life never set foot outside Alamut. Much of his time was devoted to study in his library, a treasure house of contemporary knowledge. He wrote several works, some of which have survived, but was not only one of the most erudite men of his time but a forceful guardian of Ismaili security and stern upholder of the religious laws whose missionaries made many converts and whose troops established a network of mountain fortresses controlling the whole region. Sunni caliphs and Seljuq sultans tried to break his hold in a protracted struggle in which so many of his men were imprisoned and executed, mutilated and massacred, that towers were built of Ismaili skulls. The Grand Master of Alamut retaliated no less ferociously, earning a reputation for severity and stealth which descended to his successors and rubbed off on all Ismailis.

Because he could not match his enemies in numbers, Hasan-i-Sabbah employed the dagger against the sword relying on a small force of self-sacrificing, death-defying *fida'is* (devotees). Although Muslims were not permitted to take alcohol, his enemies said that Hasan recruited his devotees with the help of intoxicating liquor and drugs which induced hallucinations of Paradise, and is supposed to have promised them that, if they lost their lives in his service, the pleasures of Paradise would be theirs for ever. They became known as *hashishiyyum*, hashish-takers or 'assassins', and the evil association still clings to Ismailis.

In Hasan's time fear of the Assassins was fully justified. So totally did he command the loyalty of the *fida'is* that, to demonstrate it to a visiting foreign potentate, he ordered two of them to jump from a high rock. They obeyed and jumped to their death. The first victim of a *fida'i's* dagger was Nizam al-Mulk, who was killed on his way back from the palace to the quarters of his women. Using the threat



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of assassination as a psychological weapon, Hasan instructed a *fida'i* to enter an enemy commander's tent under cover of night and stick a dagger into the ground near where he slept. A message attached to the dagger told the enemy leader that he would be dead had the Grand Master of Alamut willed it. Next day the enemy withdrew.

Assassination developed into a highly effective instrument of war and the harvest of lives Hasan's men gathered was rich in quality and quantity. His successors continued the practice. It was into this siege atmosphere of fanatical Ismaili devotees that the new Imam was said to have been taken after Nizar's death. But records are confused and it is uncertain whether Imam Hadi, whom Ismailis regard as Nizar's successor, was his son or his grandson. One account speaks of a pregnant wife of Nizar's son who reached Alamut where she gave birth to the new Imam.

Controversy over this incident has never quite died down. According to one theory the direct line of succession from the Prophet and Hazrat Ali was broken at this stage, and Hasan i-Sabbah became the new Imam of the Ismailis, which would make the current Aga Khan his descendant. An Austrian historian, J. von Hammer-Purgstall, referred to the 'hereditary' Grand Master of Alamut, but Marco Polo who passed through the region on his return from China described the 'Old Man of the Mountain' as an 'elected chief' and seems to be borne out by the story of Hasan ordering the execution of his two sons—one for drinking wine, the other for disobedience—to prove that his rule was not inspired by selfish motives or dynastic plans.

Indeed, when he died at the age of ninety, he left no natural heir and was succeeded by Kiya Buzurg-Umnid, one of his military commanders. Eventually, Buzurg's heir, Mohammed, became the Grand Master of Alamut while Hadi, Nizar's successor as Ismaili Imam, was succeeded by his son, who in turn handed the Imamatus down to his son, Hasan Zakaresalam, who became Imam Number Twenty-Three and the central figure in a new argument about the Aga Khan's genealogy.

According to one account Hasan's father made his position clear and said: 'I am not the Imam but one of his *dais*.' He punished those who accepted his son Hasan Zakaresalam as Imam but, after



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his death in 1162, Hasan succeeded him. It so happens that 1162 was also the year of the Imam's death and Ismaili records show that Hasan Zakaresalam's Imamatus started in 1162. Professor Bernard Lewis quotes him as saying that he was outwardly known as the grandson of Buzurg-Umnid but in esoteric reality was the Imam, the son of the previous Imam of the line of Nizar: 'It is possible,' says Professor Lewis, 'that, as some have argued, Hasan was not claiming physical descent from Nizar . . . but a kind of spiritual filiation.'

The issue was publicly ventilated in 1866 in the High Court of Bombay in the famous 'Khoja Case' in which the descent of Aga Khan I was the central issue. In his summing up the Judge, Sir Joseph Arnould, said he would not attempt to clear up the obscurity of an Asiatic pedigree, a task which even Gibbon gave up as hopeless. Ismaili scholars simply say that Hadi was Imam Nizar's son and that he and his successors lived and worked in Alamut as Imams until Imam Zakaresalam also became Grand Master. Claims by outsiders to be the 'Imam of the time' were frequent and the confusion on this and other occasions was probably deliberately created by orthodox Sunnis to damage the Ismaili cause. Ismailis have no doubt that the Aga Khan's family tree remained intact.

The line became easier to follow although allegiances and policies continued to change frequently. First, the liberal trend was reversed and one Imam was said to have made contact with the hated Caliphs of Baghdad, to have removed Ismaili tracts from Alamut and burnt them, but he may well have practised *taqiya*. Another Imam assumed office at the age of nine and Sunni historians liken him to the Mad Caliph: 'This child,' wrote Juvayni, 'was overcome with the disease of melancholia. Theft, highway robbery and assault were daily occurrences in his kingdom. And when these things had passed all bounds, his life, wife, children, home, kingdom and wealth were forfeited to that madness and insanity.'

Yet Alamut, like Cairo under the Fatimids, was a centre of learning and attracted many foreign scholars. Alas, the time was fast approaching when neither dagger nor learning could save the 'Eagle's Nest' from disaster. One Imam was poisoned by his chief adviser in 1255, and his son, Ruknuddin Khurshah, became the last Ismaili Imam to wield territorial as well as spiritual power in



his own right. The Mongols under Genghis Khan's grandson, Hulegu, attacked the Ismaili strongholds and, though the Imam tried to rally all Muslims and come to terms with the enemy, Alamut was occupied by the Mongols who burnt down the castle and razed the ruins to the ground. Devout Ismailis rescued as many of the precious old books and manuscripts as they could carry away but the bulk of the library was destroyed. Thousands of Ismailis were massacred and the Imam only just succeeded in sending his son to safety with relatives in Persia before he, too, was murdered.

The temporal power of the Ismailis was broken but, sustained by their faith in God's guidance through their Imam, they managed to survive as a religious community. The Mongols moved on and sacked Baghdad and killed the Caliph with some eighty thousand of his people. After five hundred years the rule of the Abbasides was broken at the same time as the rule of the Ismailis whom they had fought throughout. Alamut has been a heap of ruins ever since: 'Although by this utter overthrow,' said the Judge in the Khoja Case, 'in which men, women and children were unsparingly put to the edge of the sword, the Assassins of Alamut ceased to be a terror to Asia, yet the race of the Ismailis still survives in Persia and the hereditary succession of their unrevealed Imams is traced in unbroken line down to the Aga Khan.'

In a fiercely hostile world *taqiya* disguised Ismaili activities and hid the identity of the Imams even though, in the sixteenth century, the Shia faith became Persia's official religion and persecution of the Ismailis ceased. Without revealing their position as spiritual leaders of the Ismailis, Imams became prominent in Persian affairs. Ismaili records lift a little of the secrecy. They trace one Imam to Anjudan in Kashan, a hundred miles south of Teheran. Like his successors, against all odds and even while practising dissimulation, he continued to proselytise and send out *dais* to spread the faith.

The missionaries' technique was to 'accept' the creed of the people they wanted to convert and to master their languages—some of the finest Ismaili poetry was written by missionaries in their adopted tongues—before proceeding to break down rival beliefs and to substitute, step by step, their own credo. Considering the circumstances, they were amazingly successful. Under Imam Shah Islam Shah (1370-1424)—eighteen generations ahead of Karim Aga



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Khan—the great *dais* Pir Sadruddin went to India where he converted several Hindu tribes to the Ismaili faith. The new Ismailis called themselves Khojas or ‘honourable converts’.

A jealously guarded Ismaili book in Gujarati records details of the life and work of the Imams who led a double existence as clandestine religious leaders of a secret sect and prominent personalities in the existing social order. In the meantime the Shia faith was gaining ground in Persia and in the eighteenth century we find the Aga Khan’s ancestors once more without disguise or camouflage on the stage of history.



CHAPTER III

Taqiya played havoc with the recorded history of Ismaili Imams and their followers, and outsiders never knew who was who. One of the Aga Khan's ancestors, Imam Nizar Ali Shah (1585-1629), seems to have carried the practice farther than most when he joined forces with Nadir Shah of Persia who was Turkish by race and a Sunni and hostile to the 'Shia heresy'. They fought side by side in many campaigns. By 1730, Ismaili Imams were firmly established as members of the Persian hierarchy. One, Abul Hasan Ali, was Viceroy of Kirman Province and Governor of Kuhk and later retired to his huge estates at Mahallat from which he and his descendants took the title 'Lords of Mahallat'.

His son Khalilullah, who was close to Fath-Ali Shah, second Kajar Sultan of Persia, established his Darkhana (current residence) at Yezd and followers came from the Ganges and the Indus to get his blessing and pay their religious dues. When Khalilullah was murdered by a fanatical mullah, the Shah, mindful of the Ismaili reputation, did not want to be held responsible. He punished the assailants severely and conferred large possessions on the murdered man's son, Shah Hasan Ali Shah, who became the next Imam. He even gave him the hand of his daughter in marriage. The house of the Prophet of Islam was joined with the Persian dynasty which went on to rule until 1925.

A wealthy, charming and impressive young man, his handsome face framed in a full black beard, the Imam became his royal father-in-law's favourite but aroused a good deal of jealousy at court. He was known by the pet name of Aga Khan (Great Chief) which he adopted as his hereditary title. In the civil war which broke out after Shah Fath-Ali's death in 1834—few oriental rulers died with-



out causing a war of succession—Aga Khan sided with the old Shah's grandson Muhammad who ascended the throne and appointed him commander-in-chief. He liberated Kirman which had gone over to a rival claimant, and the Persian government promised to refund the cost of the campaign. Then he returned to his estates to lead the life of a wealthy prince, entertaining and hunting in grand style. But he was very much the Imam of the Ismailis.

For the privilege of setting eyes on him or kissing his hands, no sacrifice was too great for loyal followers who travelled thousands of miles by sea and land to his Darkhana. In 1829, a hundred or more Khojas from India spent £500 a head—a fantastic sum at the time—on the trip but had the satisfaction of seeing the Imam twelve times in a few weeks while they camped in the grounds of his palace. He conferred titles on deserving Ismailis and his successors have continued the practice and created a religious hierarchy of *kamarias* (treasurers) and *mukhis* (clerics), *aitmadis* (counsellors) and *vazirs* (in East Africa, *vazir*, and count).

Little was heard of him until the year 1838 when an officer of lowly origin, encouraged by Shah Muhammad's Prime Minister, demanded his daughter, Shah Fath-Ali's grand-daughter, as wife for his son. It was a preposterous idea and a wounding personal insult. Since the Prime Minister also refused to pay the money owing for the Kirman campaign, the Aga Khan decided to avenge the insult and get his money at the same time. According to a contemporary account, he 'raised the standard of revolt', proclaimed an independent government at Kirman and marched his men against the capital.

Before he could get very far, he was captured and taken to Teheran where he might have languished in prison for life had his wife not sent their young son—the great-grandfather of Karim Aga Khan—to court to recite poems in praise of forgiveness before the Shah who was so moved that he set the Aga Khan free. But the Prime Minister soon provoked him into another open rebellion and sent another army against him. Narrowly escaping capture for a second time, a rearguard action took the Aga Khan across the border into Afghanistan which was still at war with Britain.

He offered his services to the British who accepted and promised to help him regain his Persian possessions. The records speak



highly of the heroism and diplomatic skill of the 'Persian Prince'. A mutiny of native troops—the Aga Khan dealt with the situation. British officers held prisoner—the Aga Khan's men smuggled letters in and out of prison. The city of Herat in danger—the Aga Khan to the rescue. The Mirs suspicious—the Aga Khan establishing contact with the British.

The British General Sir Charles Napier was fulsome in his praise: 'I have sent the Persian Prince Aga Khan to Jarrack, on the right bank of the Indus,' he wrote on one occasion—Jarrack was the Aga Khan's first Darkhana on the sub-continent and the scene of his first encounter with the Baluchis who killed seventy-two of his followers including the *mukhi* who died saving their leader's life. 'His influence is great,' General Napier continued, 'and he will with his own followers secure our communications with Karachi.' In a private letter, some time later, General Napier explained: 'The old Persian Prince is my great crony here, living not under my care but paid by me £2,000 a year. He is a God . . . I speak truly when saying that his followers do not and dare not refuse him any favour . . . he could kill me if he pleased, has only to say the word and one of his people can do the job in a twinkling and go straight to heaven for the same. He is too shrewd a man for that, however.'

The Aga Khan was gratified when his help in the Afghan war was recognised: 'As a reward for my services,' he wrote, 'the General gave me presents. He further assigned to me the territory of Moola Rusheed yielding an income of forty thousand rupees.' When the British attacked Sind, the Aga Khan led his own cavalry regiment in the field by their side. The campaign ended with the conquest of Sind and the Viceroy, Lord Ellenborough, sent his famous punning telegram to Whitehall: 'Peccavi' (I have sinned).

Fighting Britain's battles, however gallantly, did not take the Aga Khan closer to recovering his Persian rights and properties. On the contrary, the wheels of history turned, Persia and Britain resolved their quarrel, and the Aga Khan was left in the lurch. The Persians promptly reminded London of an agreement dating back to 1814 and providing for the extradition of Persians hostile to the Persian government which looked like a ready-made noose for the Aga Khan's neck. London seemed impervious to the fate of this loyal ally.



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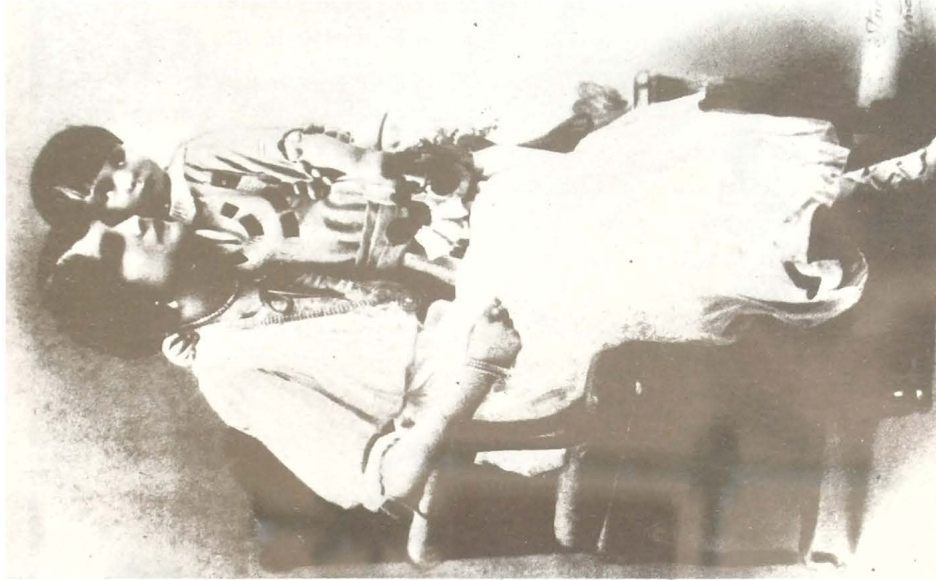
His Royal Highness, Prince Sultan Mohammed Shah, Aga Khan (centre), at the age of eight, when he was installed on the throne of the Imamate in Bombay after being proclaimed as Hazar Imam. (Keystone)

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Prince Aly Khan with his mother, Teresa Magliano, Aga Khan III's second wife.
(Keystone)



A portrait of the young Aga Khan III.
(Keystone)

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For the Aga Khan the problem now was how to escape extradition. He wrote innumerable petitions but all they achieved was a British-Persian arrangement to remove him from easy access to Persia. Calcutta was suggested as a safe exile but he protested that he would be alone and without friends and followers. When the British government threatened to stop his pension if he refused to go, he made his way to Bombay where he arrived in 1845 at the head of an imposing regiment of some eight hundred fiery horsemen. Rumour which was probably not far wrong had it that they were all—all eight hundred of them—the Aga Khan's natural sons. A refugee in a foreign land, he was yet received with the homage due to the spiritual head of the strong Khoja community, but if he had hoped to stay he had not reckoned with his Persian enemies.

They were not happy to see him residing at a port from which he could easily cross to Persia and persuaded the British authorities to force him to go to Calcutta. The Superintendent of Mysore Princes was instructed to take him under his care: 'Aga Khan Mahallati is a nobleman of high rank and allied to the royal family of Persia. He is in receipt of a British allowance of 3,000 rupees . . . The President in Council request that you engage provisionally a suitable house for his use . . . His position as regards the Persian government makes it inexpedient to show him any marked distinction but . . . he should be treated with the utmost courtesy and consideration.'

The Aga Khan spent an unhappy time in Calcutta but in 1848 Muhammad Ali Shah died and, though even Lord Palmerston's intervention failed to secure his admission to Persia, he was permitted to return to Bombay which became his main base. With a taste for oriental splendour, he established an imposing residence on Malabar Hill overlooking the sea and installed his family in equally sumptuous and costly houses around him. The affairs of the Khoja community were conducted from Aga Hall, a magnificent palace with separate library and staff quarters, set in fine parkland and enclosed by a high wall. The Aga Khan's Bombay realm occupied an area about half the size of London's Mayfair or a slice of Paris between the Madeleine, the Opéra and Porte d'Iéna. A similar complex came into being in Poona where the family spent part of the year, and in Bangalore.



Apart from his three wives, three sons and three daughters, the Aga Khan also looked after a thousand or more relatives and retainers who had come with him from Persia, married Indian wives and produced children. These devoured a tremendous amount of money but although he complained bitterly about the loss of his Persian estates (and some £20,000 of which he said the Baluchis had robbed him) he was by no means short of funds. As their fathers and fathers' fathers before them, his followers paid *zakat* which was collected by the mukhi and the kamaria. A few years later, the amount he received in this way was stated to be approximately £10,000 a year.

The Aga Khan took his religious duties very seriously, visited the *jamatkhana*, the Ismaili religious centre, on all holy days and led the community in prayer on the anniversary of Hazrat Huseyn's martyrdom, presiding over the ritual distribution of water mixed with the holy dust of Kerbeia. On Saturdays, the community came to kiss hands—it was a united community of small traders with some very rich men among them, strictly organised and observing their own birth, marriage and death ceremonies.

They could also be troublesome. About this time one group of Khojas, some three hundred families, refused to pay *zakat*, an outrageous offence among Ismailis who usually insisted on pressing their contributions on the Imam in the hope of reward in Paradise. The recalcitrant Khojas were expelled from the community, applied for readmission and promised to pay up but defaulted a second time and were again expelled. In the meantime an English court confirmed that the Aga Khan was entitled to *zakat* by precedent and by Muslim law. The conflict caused a lot of bitterness. In the *jamatkhana* of Mahim in 1850, the rival factions clashed and four Khojas died. Nineteen were tried for murder and four of them sentenced to death and hanged.

Such violent interludes cast a rare shadow over the Imam's illustrious establishment. His family travelled widely and his eldest son, Aga Ali Shah, spent much time in Baghdad and Kerbela making up the old family quarrel with the Persian ruling house. A highly intelligent young man, the Aga Khan's heir diligently prepared himself for his future as Imam. Persian and Arab mullahs taught him oriental languages, literature and metaphysics and instructed



him in the esoteric secrets of the Ismaili faith. He passed much of his knowledge to the community and pioneered its educational institutions. A commission on which he worked brought the sect's confusing religious law up to date. Tragedy struck his two sons by his first wife, one of whom died of a chest complaint and the other as a result of fatal injuries when he was thrown by a horse. Their father married a second time but lost his wife and took a third, Nawab Aalia Shamsul Muluk, a grand-daughter of Fath-Ali Shah and daughter of a one-time Persian Minister who spent the last years of his life in meditation.

An intrepid horseman and hunter, Aga Ali Shah was a legend in his own lifetime, the only prince in India who pursued tigers on foot and such a deadly shot that he bagged at least forty in this unorthodox fashion. When the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII, came to Aga Hall during his visit to India he could not hear enough about this sensational hunting technique. Pointing to his considerable embonpoint, Aga Ali Shah confessed that it was difficult for him to climb on to a high platform. The Prince of Wales was not much slimmer and understood. He admired Aga Ali Shah's hunting trophies and the Aga Khan's many cups won on the Indian turf.

It was in Bombay that the first Aga Khan started the tradition of racing and breeding which made his grandson, the third Aga Khan, a household word and is carried on by Prince Karim. The earlier Aga Khan's stables housed the world's finest Arabian blood and the stud in the valley of Nejd produced superb animals. No expense was too great to improve the bloodstock; leading trainers and jockeys, mostly English, were engaged. Bombay racecourse was one of the few public places where he showed himself—the stand from which he watched his horses was preserved by Bombay's leading club.

Once more the tranquillity of the community was disturbed by Khojas who claimed to be Sunnis and refused to pay up. The community was so widely dispersed that it was difficult to ascertain who acknowledged the Aga Khan as spiritual leader and who did not, who was paying *zakat* and who was not. In predominantly Sunni areas, Ismailis still practised *taqiya* and it was well-nigh impossible to tell Sunni from Shia. To clear the air the Aga Khan



ordered his followers everywhere to reveal themselves openly as Shia Imami Ismailis. Officially this was the end of *taqiya*. He sent open lists to all communities and asked members to sign their names: ‘. . . so that I may know them.’

The overwhelming majority signed and declared unswerving support for the Imam but the so-called Khoja Reform Party challenged the Aga Khan’s claim to religious leadership and took their case to court. In February 1866, Sir Joseph Arnould began to hear the *cause célèbre* which became known as the Khoja Case. High principles and big amounts were at stake. The Aga Khan’s religious empire was on trial. If he did not cherish washing the community’s dirty linen in public he welcomed the opportunity to put an end to the whispers which caused dissent.

The Khojas asked the court to order the chief defendant, Mohammed Huseyn Husseini, otherwise called Aga Khan, and his two principal fellow defendants (chief *mukhi* and chief *kamaria*) to hand over the property of the Khoja community and vacate their offices. They wanted him to be restrained from interfering in the management of the community and demanded a declaration that he was not entitled to excommunicate them. Their argument was that they were Sunnis and they rejected the Aga Khan’s right to *zakat*. Many side issues were raised and many historical and religious assumptions paraded.

The proceedings lasted twenty-five days after which the Judge settled down to study the mountain of evidence and seek enlightenment in history—in the history of the Aga Khan and the Khojas. When giving his verdict in November 1866, he started out by saying that the crucial points in the case were the Khojas’ spiritual and temporal relations with the ancestors of the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan’s claim that they had, in the long line of hereditary descent, successively been the spiritual chiefs of the Shia Imami Ismailis. The cardinal question was whether the Khojas in their origin as a separate religious community were Sunnis or non-Sunnis, that is Shia Imami Ismailis.

The verdict unequivocally confirmed the Aga Khan as the spiritual head of the Khoja community. Sir Joseph Arnould took the view that their ancestors had been converted to the Ismaili faith, had throughout abided by it, had always been and still were bound by



ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imam of the Ismailis: 'Mohammed Huseyn Hussein,' the Judge said, 'otherwise Aga Khan, or, as he is more formally styled in official documents, His Highness Aga Khan Mahallati, is the hereditary chief and unrevealed Imam of the Ismailis, the present or living holder of the Imamatus claiming descent in direct line from Ali, the Vicar of God, through the seventh and (according to the Ismaili creed) the last of the Revealed Imams, Ismail, the son of Jafar Sadiq.' He was fully entitled to the customary dues and 'rightfully wielded his formidable powers of mediating sentences of excommunication'. The Ismaili version of the Aga Khan's family history received the court's seal of authenticity but descendants of the Khoja rebels of 1866 have on several occasions, albeit unsuccessfully, tried to revive the old feud and to reverse the Bombay verdict.

The old Aga Khan, well into his seventies, delegated many functions to his son Aga Ali Shah whose third marriage was an exceptionally happy one. Lady Ali Shah was a well-rounded woman with soft good looks and luminous dark eyes hidden behind her yashmak. For an oriental princess, she was open minded, practical, shrewd and interested in public affairs. The couple started their married life at a hilltop palace in Karachi bought from the Maharajah of Kolhabur and renamed 'Honeymoon Lodge'. They had two sons in quick succession both of whom died in infancy. On November 2nd, 1877, at 'Honeymoon Lodge', Lady Ali Shah gave birth to a third baby, a delicate but resilient boy who was named Sultan Mohammed. Karachi took the baby to its heart, his birthplace became known as 'Sultan Tekri' (Sultan Hill) or 'Tekri' for short.

Prince Sultan Mohammed was still a small boy when his father first took him on visits to Ismaili communities and to *jamatkhanas* for prayers and religious ceremonies. One of his earliest memories was of his grandfather, 'an old man, almost blind, seated on a grey Arab horse, peering to watch a line of other horses galloping in training'.

Supported by servants, the baby prince was on a pony by the old man's side. For the fine old Persian aristocrat it was almost the end of the road. His Highness Prince Hasan Shah Mahallati, Aga Khan I, died in April 1881 and was survived by three sons, Aga Ali Shah, Aga Jangi Shah and Aga Akber Shah. After an impressive funeral



he was laid to rest in Hassanabad, a mausoleum in the grounds of his palace. The Shah of Persia sent a warm message of condolence and, following an old Persian tradition, gave the new Imam, Aga Ali Shah, Aga Khan II, a precious robe and the emblem of the Persian crown studded with diamonds which has been handed down to Karim Aga Khan as a treasured family heirloom.

The health of little Prince Sultan Mohammed was so precarious, doctors feared he might not live. He was fussed over by his mother and her servants and the thought that he would one day inherit the Imamatus was never far from the minds of the people around him. The day came sooner than expected. Aga Ali Shah had been Imam for only four years when he caught a chill hunting and developed pneumonia. He died in Poona in August 1885 and his body was embalmed and taken to Kufa, the Shias' holy place, where he was buried in the same spot as his saintly ancestor Hazrat Ali, the first Imam.

To the boy of eight who now became the forty-eighth Imam and Aga Khan III the death of his father was 'the first big emotional and spiritual crisis of my life'. An historic photograph shows him at his installation on the *Gadi* of Imams, a divan-like throne, surrounded by the bearded, turbaned Ismaili nobles. In his smart *sherwani* and astrakhan hat, he looked solemn but completely self-assured among the figures of a passing age. Like other Imams before him, he mourned the end of a carefree childhood. Once more in Ismaili history, but in a more enlightened period, a little boy was suddenly credited with mystical powers and unusual wisdom and became the subject of deep veneration.

His early contacts with the English in India served as useful checks and balances. Lady Dufferin, the Viceroy's wife, took an interest in him, and Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay, and his wife asked him to tea. An English tutor, Mr Kenny stimulated his interest in 'Eng. Lit.' (Shakespeare, Milton, Macaulay, Scott) and other mentors, religious instructors and governesses belaboured him with French, Arabic, Urdu, Gujarati, Persian literature (Hafiz and Omar Khayyám became his favourites), history and the philosophy of the faith of which he was now the supreme arbiter. He was constantly exhorted to think good thoughts, do good deeds, speak good words—and tried hard to oblige.

Although acutely short-sighted, he was forced to practise calli-



graphy in a cruel daily discipline which was plain torture and would have broken a less indomitable spirit ('I cannot understand that I did not die'). Before he was much older, theology, science, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and mechanics were added to his curriculum laying the foundations of his encyclopaedic knowledge which he constantly improved by asking questions of everybody about everything.

Sport was not his strong suit. Unlike other Indian princes, he never took up cricket but liked hockey and eventually introduced the sport to India. In later years he went fox- or jackal-hunting in a desultory way. Spectator sports like horse-racing were more to his taste. When his mother got rid of her late husband's hawks and hounds he was not particularly concerned but the family's racing establishment, though reduced from eighty to thirty horses, was still good enough for his colours—red and green, the colours of the Ismaili flag—to show up well on the Indian turf. He was, of course, very rich but the British government made him an allowance of a thousand rupees a year and, when he was nine years old, Queen Victoria conferred on him the title 'Highness' as, some seventy years later, Queen Elizabeth II honoured his grandson Karim (same title, no pension).

The Aga Khan's early life was dominated by the remarkable Lady Ali Shah who frequently ordered his bottom to be spanked. 'My mother,' he said, 'is the only woman of whom I have ever been afraid.' She made the oriental attitude to women look rather foolish and it was with her in mind that he campaigned for the emancipation of Indian women. Social advancement and happiness, he came to think, were greatest where women were least debarred by artificial barriers and narrow prejudices. He ordered Ismaili women to do away with the veil and come out of purdah, 'the imprisonment of half the nation'. Orthodox Muslims reproached him but he was simply ahead of his time.

In the manner of Indian princes, the family moved with the seasons from Bombay to Poona to Mahabaleshwar and back to Bombay. Lady Ali Shah managed the boy's fortune and made excellent investments. She bought properties in Ismaili centres in India and Africa at favourable prices which later enabled the Aga Khan to stay at his own palaces whenever he visited his community.



Although he was under no legal obligation to support them, his relatives not only lived in houses he owned but also received allowances from him that were taken so much for granted that an angry family wrangle in the courts came about as a result. People living on his estates were fed at his expense, a practice his grandfather had started.

At the age of sixteen, the Imam took charge of his own affairs but his mother continued to keep an eye on his extensive properties and to look after the community. The management of his racing establishment he shared with Aga Shamsuddin, his cousin and closest friend, and some of their horses did extremely well, winning the Nizam's Gold Cup, the most important race in western India, four times in succession. In spite of his youth, western India's Muslims chose him to present their address on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. At the same time he handed over his own and the community's homage in a solid gold casket in the shape of an elephant. His address assured the Queen that he was as loyal to the English throne as his grandfather, who had fought for it on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Sind.

The young Imam had his own battles to fight. While on a pilgrimage to Jeddah, Uncle Aga Shah and his son were murdered and word was put around that the culprits were *fida'is*, as fanatically devoted to the Aga Khan as those of Alamut had been to the Old Man of the Mountain. Lady Ali Shah was said to be at the head of Moto Punth, a secret Ismaili society not unlike Hasan-i-Sabbah's 'Assassins'. Aga Jangi Shah's murderers were arrested but when they were found poisoned in their cells before they could be brought to trial, it was announced that they had committed suicide. Speculation was rife. Some said they had been murdered on the Aga Khan's orders so they could not incriminate him.

The Aga Khan's health suffered as a result of the tragedy but as soon as he was fit to travel he went on a tour of Muslim centres in the course of which he visited the Anglo-Muslim College of Aligarh and was deeply impressed by its founder, Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan, and the students who shared his deep sense of Muslim tradition and destiny. How wonderful if Aligarh could become a full university to bring up a generation of young leaders and advance the cause of Islam. Here was a chance to follow in the footsteps of his ancestor



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who had founded al-Azhar, the first Muslim university, which greatly appealed to the young Aga Khan. He decided to put up money for the cause and persuaded wealthy friends to contribute. It was a long struggle but he missed no opportunity to plead for this cause and when Aligarh finally became a university two dozen years later, it was more to Muslims than a seat of learning. In retrospect it was recognised as the intellectual cradle of independent Pakistan and the Aga Khan's enthusiasm and support which made it possible earned him a place among Pakistan's founding fathers.

When he returned to Bombay he found—a bride. Gallantly the Aga Khan always insisted that he had been deeply in love with his cousin Shahzadi, daughter of the murdered Aga Jangi Shah and sister of Aga Shamsuddin. But in spite of his protestations, it looked suspiciously as if Lady Ali Shah had arranged her son's marriage so as to silence the rumour that either she or he was responsible for the death of the bride's father. As Aga Shamsruddin was also taking a wife, a spectacular double marriage was arranged.

The nuptials were celebrated with customary ritual and extravagant hospitality. Surrounded by friends and relatives and dressed in precious robes, the two bridegrooms and their brides sat side by side on a platform in the grounds of the palace. Thousands of guests looked on as the *mukhi* chanted his prayers and, the religious formalities completed, an unending line of Indian princes, British dignitaries and Ismaili delegations offered congratulations. For sixteen days consecutively guests were treated to delicacies and (non-alcoholic) drinks and, in the atmosphere of a joyous élite fair-ground, entertained with music, swordsmen's dances and performances from acrobats and tumblers. The double wedding costs were more than £50,000, in those days a gigantic sum.

But life in Bombay was not all glitter and gold. When violent communal rioting broke out, the Aga Khan ordered his followers not to join in attacks on Hindus, even offering Hindus refuge on his estate. When India was hit by famine and thousands of his followers became destitute, he supplied them with seeds, cattle and tools enabling many to start a new life. They camped at Hassanabad and were fed from his kitchens. From his own pocket he put up half a million rupees to build Yarovda Palace in Poona for no other purpose than to provide employment for his followers.



After the famine, the bubonic plague. Khojas living in the worst hit part of Bombay refused to be inoculated. To break down their prejudice, the Aga Khan gave his bungalow to the medical authorities as a laboratory and allowed himself to be inoculated not once but several times to set an example. (Similarly, he took a sympathetic interest in the Untouchables, many of whom were converted to the Ismaili faith, educated at his expense and given employment—long before Mahatma Gandhi took up their cause.)

The young Ismaili leader had little time to attend to his own problems. Although reluctant to admit it to himself, his marriage was not a success. The wedding bells—and the Reform Party's campaign—had hardly died down when he exchanged his oriental silk robes for a well-cut lounge suit and went on a visit to Europe without Shahzadi. The change of clothes and the change of climate were meaningful. His first trip overseas turned out to be more than a voyage of discovery. It was a giant stride from the nineteenth towards the twentieth century, from the battlefields of the East to the parquet floors of the West, a plunge into another world which he would soon make his own.

Accompanied by a retinue of servants he sailed from Bombay to Marseilles. The Côte d'Azur was the destination of this very presentable, round-faced young man with a dark drooping moustache and short-sighted eyes which disguised a deceptively quick mind. Not very tall and with an early hint of corpulence, he did not look very prepossessing but already had a quality best described as 'personality'. In these strange surroundings he seemed at first shy and reticent but the tails and frock coat, patent leather shoes and spats, sashes and decorations in his luggage suggested the social landscape for which he was heading.

In the high season of 1898, the man who later came to own some of the Riviera's finest villas, found it difficult to get rooms. Queen Victoria was at Cimiez, Austria's Emperor Franz Josef at Cap Martin. There were so many Balkan kings, Russian granddukes and German princes about, the newcomer was 'dazzled and awed'. But people were not unmindful of his status in his own world. Apartments were found for him at Queen Victoria's hotel and he was thrilled to watch her come and go and noticed the Indian servants in attendance.



From the Riviera to Paris where he saw Sarah Bernhardt at the Comédie Française, visited the Opéra and lunched at the Jockey Club. He was incognito and discretion covered the more mundane pleasures of a young man on his first visit to Paris. But when he moved on to London, it was as 'His Highness, the Aga Khan'. The Duke of Connaught welcomed him on behalf of the Queen and presented an invitation to meet her and spend the night at Windsor Castle. At the dinner in his honour he was seated on the Queen's right and noticed that she had the German habit of frequently inserting 'so' (pronounced 'tzo') in her conversation. He thought her Indian servants inferior to his own. The Prince of Wales nominated him for the Marlborough Club—fifty years later, he was fond of saying, he and the hall porter were the club's oldest inhabitants.

His successes as an owner and breeder of racehorses in India were, of course, well known. Queen Victoria gave him a Royal Household badge for the enclosure at Ascot race-course and all her successors bestowed the same privilege on him as 'a friend of the family'. When he went to register his colours he found that this had already been done as a courtesy by one of his English racing friends. The colours turned out to be not green and red (the Fatimid colours), which were not available, but green and chocolate instead. They became so successful that he never changed them although elsewhere his horses raced under green and red colours which his son adopted when they became free.

The lure of racing was strong and the Aga Khan attended the exciting Derby which was won by the hundred to one outsider Jeddah; he was on the winner but had only managed to get sixty-six to one. He told the Duke of Connaught that he hoped to win the Derby one day but could not have expected in his wildest dreams that he would win the world's greatest classic race five times. The London Season over, he visited Paris, Geneva, Lausanne, Florence and Vienna. It would have been a perfect summer had there not been news from India with an ominously familiar ring—Hashim Shah, a cousin, had been killed by a steward in his own house in Poona. One saving grace—the murder was prompted by a personal grudge and had no religious significance.

Lawlessness and violence in his own back-yard would have to be



dealt with firmly, he decided, as he travelled back to India and Malabar Hill—but not to his wife. Only the splendid oriental isolation in which they lived disguised the failure of his marriage. Though living under the same roof and maintaining appearances, he and Begum Shahzadi drifted apart, she—according to him—‘to a private purgatory of resentment and reproach’, he to the social round and his duties as a religious leader. He played a little golf and went racing. The English in India liked him, East and West met in perfect harmony. His working day at his main office at Aga Hall was occupied with the affairs of the Khoja community.

The feudal establishment he had inherited was becoming quite insupportable. The number of descendants of his grandfather’s horsemen and of Ismaili pilgrims who had stayed behind as retainers had vastly increased and included whole families from Central Asia, Turkistan, Sinkiang, Bokhara, Afghanistan and Africa. The bigger they grew, the smaller were their allowances from the Aga Khan which were split so many ways that each received only a pittance. Some of them made a little money on the side as hawkers, racing tipsters and odd-job men but the majority just idled. They were well fed (by the Aga Khan) but unruly and mischievous and, though he was anxious to get rid of them, once let loose on Bombay as vagrants, they were liable to become a public danger.

It took many months to liquidate this embarrassing heritage of a turbulent phase in Ismaili history. In the end the Aga Khan paid lump sums to some and sent them packing. Others were helped to start new careers away from Bombay and some who were not even Indian citizens were deported. He provided funds to set up schools for children who stayed behind and many of them went on to universities and became lawyers, doctors and civil servants. The purge did not completely deprive the Aga Khan of servants. When it was over he still employed about a thousand at his various residences.

His next trip was to Africa where Indians worked and traded much as the Irish in England and the United States. Many were Hindus—Gandhi was practising law in South Africa in the 1890s—but thousands who had settled in East Africa were Muslims and Ismailis, many of them rich and prominent in public life and politics. Without help from Indians, explorers could not have



mounted some of their expeditions—Tharia Topan, who became the leader of Ismailis in East Africa, saved the life of the famous H. M. Stanley who, in November 1871, found Dr David Livingstone at Ujiji, Lake Tanganyika: ‘One of the honestest among men, white or black, red or yellow,’ Stanley wrote, ‘is a Mohammedan Hindi called Topan . . . among the Europeans at Zanzibar he has become a proverb for honesty and strict business integrity. He is enormously wealthy, owns several ships and dhows, and is a prominent man in the councils of the Ruler of Zanzibar’—Zanzibar was the Ismaili headquarters in Africa.

Sir Tharia—he was knighted by Queen Victoria—received the young Aga Khan on his arrival and introduced him to the community. (Sir Tharia, incidentally, was typical of the cross-fertilisation of Ismaili talent between India and Africa. When Pakistan became independent in 1947, descendants of many East African Indians returned to the sub-continent, and Sir Tharia’s own great-grandson, Dr Habib Patel, a leading member of Pakistan’s medical profession, now heads the extensive Ismaili health organisation in Karachi.) For Ismailis it was a tremendous occasion. Because they had not as yet built their big *jamatkhana*s, in most of their homes one room or at least a corner was set aside for worship. Now their veneration concentrated on the supreme pontiff to whom they looked for guidance:

‘I was staying in Bagamoyo in August of 1899,’ was how Otto Mahnke, a former German colonial official described the occasion, ‘when His Highness the Aga Khan set foot on the African continent for the first time. His Highness arrived in his own yacht which was anchored about four miles from the shore. Thousands of Indians, natives and also Europeans were waiting on the beach to see His Highness and welcome him . . . The enthusiasm and the veneration for His Highness on his arrival as well as during his whole stay were tremendous . . . Europeans, too, received him with great honour and an Indian from Zanzibar sent a cab with a white horse so that His Highness might move about with great speed. Ovations of the highest veneration took place everywhere but as soon as His Highness gave an almost imperceptible sign to say a few words absolute silence reigned.’

Followers crowded around him to catch his *didar* (glance), feel



the touch of his hand, get his blessing and listen to his every word. They told him their personal and business problems and firmly believed that a wave of his hand could make their difficulties disappear. Ismailis in Zanzibar were involved in an angry dispute over valuable real estate which the natives claimed. He ordered his people to compromise—all his life he believed in compromise. At Dar-es-Salaam there was ill-feeling between Ismailis and Germans who suspected them of hostile activities. The young Aga Khan managed to smooth out the differences but his first official contact with the Germans did not endear them to him and prejudiced him for decades to come. Non-Ismaili Indians were impressed and he made his first converts whose descendants became Prince Karim's most loyal followers.

On his first visit to Cairo, he was struck by the all-pervading presence of the English, who were as powerful as his Fatimid ancestors of yore. The city seemed like another Poona or Simla, Egypt as much a citadel of British supremacy as India. Such was British colonial snobbery that Egyptians were barred from the Gezira Club and similar social centres. A more leisurely precursor of the jet set of which his grandson was a prominent member two generations later, the Aga Khan returned to Bombay but, a week later, was already on his way to Burma to visit his followers there. Soon he was back in Europe once more.

In Paris he spent some time with his kinsman, Persia's Shah Muzaffir ud-Din but there was little love lost between them. The Aga Khan was shocked by the Shah's behaviour: 'Grossly ignorant, capricious, extravagant,' he called him. The Shah took fright when Monsieur and Madame Curie showed him a glowing piece of radium in a dark cellar: 'He began to scream and shout and run about the room,' the Aga Khan recalled, 'He raved and ranted and accused the Curies of trying to murder him.'

In Berlin, the Kaiser gripped the young Indian leader's hand firmly with his powerful right which compensated for a withered left arm. His next stop was Turkey where he was received by Sultan Abdul Hamid, the Terrible. Sunni and Shia in amicable discussion was an unusual ecumenical occasion. To see Hamid heavily made up, lips rouged, beard dyed black, surprised the visitor, who knew the Sultan to be a virile man and father of many children.



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He also knew of Abdul Hamid's pathological fear of assassination which accounted for the heavy armour under his enormous great-coat. The terrible Abdul Hamid smoked incessantly which did not endear him to the non-smoking Aga. The meeting was not a success—the Aga Khan later blamed the Sultan's 'disastrous reign' for Turkey joining the wrong side in the First World War.

Czar Nicholas of Russia and the Emperor of Japan were the next additions to his growing collection of crowned heads. But in the following year he lost the dearest of them, Queen Victoria, who had launched him on his progress through the corridors of royal power. The Queen was dead, long live the King! In spite of the big difference in their ages, King Edward VII and the Aga Khan were very much birds of a feather with similar interests and many mutual friends. Mayfair gossip obscured his real interests. The Aga Khan with a beautiful woman was news, the Aga Khan at the races a social event and the Aga Khan at a party a rewarding experience. But his questing mind was largely stimulated by artists, lawyers, surgeons, politicians—mainly politicians. His friendships with kings and statesmen gave him a healthy appetite for politics. Unlike his ancestors, he had no territorial power but he had a vested interest in India, in an India where Muslim and Hindu could live in communal peace. Although the trend was against him, he worked hard to ward off the gathering storm.

The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, offered him a seat on the Legislative Council in Bombay which gave him the opportunity he had been looking for. By far the youngest member, he quickly made friends with two outstanding colleagues, Lord Kitchener (whom he helped with his recruiting campaign) and Mr G. K. Gokhale, the biggest political figure among pre-Gandhi Hindus. With Muslim-Hindu relations under constant discussion, the Aga Khan, an ardent advocate of Muslim rights, was scathing about the Indian Congress Party which he thought to be blind to Muslim claims. For him, the basic issue was education, education, education. Education, he told all who would listen, was the key to a rewarding life; illiteracy the root cause of poverty and disease. If he could not carry all Muslims with him, among Ismailis his word was law. He made education the main plank of Ismaili development and it became the pillar of Ismaili success.



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In England, the following summer, the King consulted him about the Prince of Wales's forthcoming Indian tour. On this visit he went to see the aged and ailing Florence Nightingale and was annoyed when Lytton Strachey's account of their conversation made it look as if they had talked at cross purposes—he about God and Florence Nightingale about sanitation. Strachey quoted Miss Nightingale as saying of the Aga Khan: 'A most interesting man but you could never teach him sanitation.' Actually the Aga Khan had asked her serious questions about the human condition and they discussed the topic, he said 'with the gravity with which I had expounded it'.

Around that time he first met 'Whimsical Walker'—Colonel Hall Walker (later Lord Wavertree)—owner of a big stud in Ireland on whose help and advice on racing he came to rely. Their meeting foreshadowed the time, still some fifteen years distant, when the Aga Khan dominated the English turf. One of the first Aga Khan anecdotes which began to circulate, some true, some invented, all reflecting his wit and humanity, was about a man who asked how someone regarded by his followers as God could spend so much time at the races: 'And why should not God go racing?' was the Aga Khan's retort. He was seen drinking wine and was asked whether this was not a sin for a Muslim and was credited with the classic answer: 'I am so holy that when I touch wine it turns to water.'

By this time the Côte d'Azur to him was home from home. His interest in pretty women was apparent and he was seen enjoying life to the full. But his mind was on more weighty matters. Africa staked a claim on his other life and his duties as a religious leader.



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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Aga Khan III with his fourth wife, Yvette Labrousse, in Zürich, 1945. (Keystone)



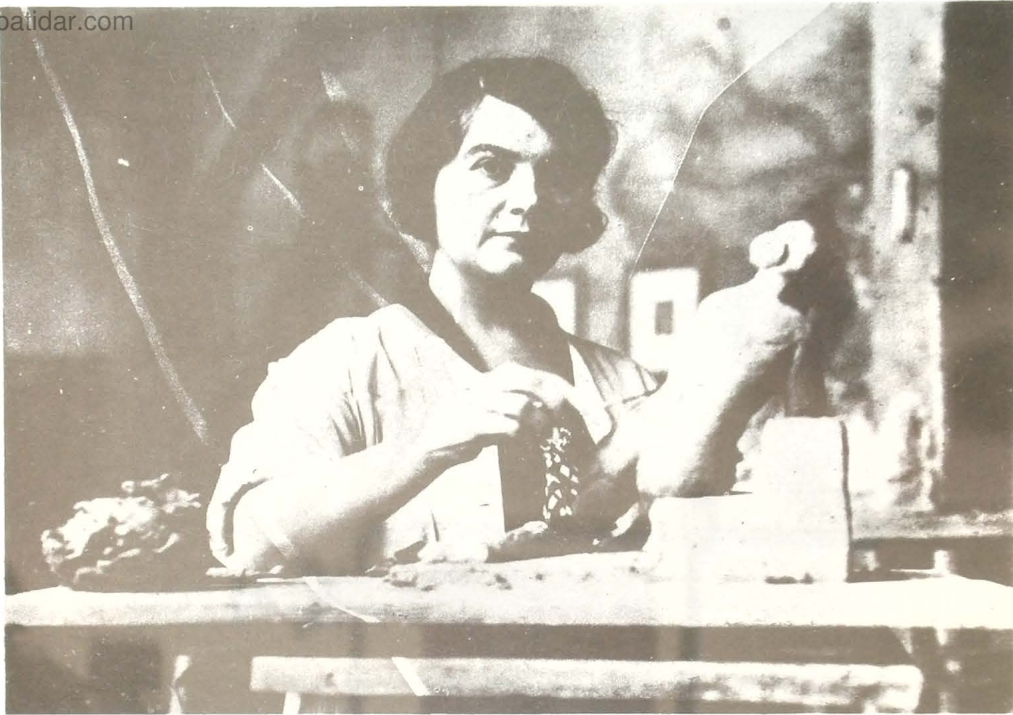
Aga Khan III and Begum Andrée at Epsom in 1938. (Radio Times Hulton Picture Library)

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Teresa Magliano.
(*Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*)



Aga Khan III and his third wife, Mlle Carron (Begum Andrée), at their wedding in 1929.
(*Keystone*)



CHAPTER IV

'WHEREAS the Holy Prophet (May Peace be upon Him) is the last Prophet of Allah,

'AND WHEREAS Hazrat Mowlana Ali (May Peace be upon Him) is the first Imam of the Shia Imami Ismailis,

'AND WHEREAS Hazrat Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Husseini Hazar Imam is the forty-ninth Imam in whom is vested absolute and unfettered Power and Authority over and in respect of all religious and social matters of the Shia Imami Ismailis . . . His Highness Hazrat Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Husseini Aga Khan is graciously pleased to ordain . . .'

'Mowlana Hazar Imam has absolute and final authority and discretion to abrogate, suspend, rescind, amend, delete, alter, add to, vary or modify the Constitution.'

From 'The Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismailis in Africa' and 'The Constitution of the Councils and Jamats of Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims of Pakistan', 1962.

CONDITIONS in India deteriorated and the Aga Khan worked out a plan to settle large numbers of Indians in Africa. He put it to the Viceroy's Council and it was still being considered when, in 1905, he decided to pay his second visit to East Africa. He was twenty-eight, well informed on political and social conditions in the West and anxious to bring the benefits of western civilisation to his people.

In Zanzibar he found his followers' state of health leaving much to be desired. Although they were well off, he was shocked by their low physique and a high incidence of tuberculosis among them. Many were listless and apathetic but when they blamed the climate,



he called the community leaders together and told them that it was no different in India, yet his Khojas were certainly not apathetic. He converted one of his palaces into a sports centre, offered prizes for athletics, football and cycling competitions and laid down a programme for systematic health care.

He had even bigger plans. What his followers needed was a set of firm rules to embrace their whole life, an administrative and religious framework. He decided to give the Ismaili community a written constitution. With the authority of his office, he told local leaders what he had in mind and in a series of consultations with them laid the groundwork of the world-wide Ismaili organisation of Territorial, Provincial and Local Councils, the leaders to be chosen by the Imam from panels of local candidates. He instituted a 'Pledge of Office' by which officials would swear, in the name of Allah, to discharge their duties without fear, favour, affection or ill will, bear allegiance to Mowlana Hazar Imam and the Ismaili faith, not to disclose matters discussed *in camera* and to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.

The rights and duties of *mukhis* and *kamarias* were clearly defined and system was brought into social and cultural activities. Health and education, twin pillars of Ismaili strength and economic welfare were regulated. One set of rules was devoted to *jamatkhanas* (*jamat* means community) where Ismailis meet not only for prayers but for group activities, children's exercise and religious instruction. A cornerstone of the Constitution would be a Personal Law to govern the lives of Ismailis from cradle to grave. Antiquated Muslim practices were discarded, contamination with tribal customs shunned. Polygamy was out, child marriages were out. Engagements would be registered and could not be lightly broken off. Divorces were a matter for the *mukhi*, perhaps even the Council; among grounds for divorce were a partner's renunciation of the Ismaili faith, a husband's impotence or a disease which made married life dangerous for the other partner. Disputes about dowries and alimonies to be submitted for decision to the *mukhi* and *kamaria*.

The Constitution eventually laid down the details of engagement and wedding ceremonies—avoid ostentation, limit the number of guests (to two hundred in Africa), no extravagant wedding gowns, no alcoholic drinks. As to the children, strict rules on legitimacy,



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guardianship and adoption were laid down. At the other end of the line were the rules for burials. The Imam's judicial powers were not limited except by his sense of duty and fairness but Councils were given wide authority to admonish or punish offenders. Severest punishment was and is 'excommunication' which completely divorced the offender from his fellow Ismailis and could be ruinous. (Paragraph 220 of the African Constitution says: 'No Isma'ili other than the immediate family members of a person who has been excommunicated shall have any social or other association with him.') Apostates were regarded as enemies and no Ismaili would ever marry a defector from the faith.

The first Ismaili Constitution was issued in Zanzibar on September 9, 1905, but was not published in printed form until 1922 when it appeared in English and Gujarati (more recently it was also translated into German). Although it has since been revised several times, the basic laws remain the same as those first laid down by Aga Khan III. Designed for a society which was still largely primitive, the original 1905 draft was a splendid testimonial to his scholarly and modern mind. He issued a Holy Firman ordering Ismailis to abide by it and instructed local leaders to send him regular reports about every aspect of the community's life. The practice is still followed and his young successor is often snowed under with communications from Ismailis all over the world.

Back in Bombay, the Aga Khan found India's Muslims in need of political attention. Lord Minto, the new Viceroy, and John Morley, Secretary of State for India in Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal government, were working on a reform of the Indian administration and Muslims were concerned about their place in the new scheme. The Aga Khan no longer saw them as merely a religious community, they were developing into a national entity with the right to be represented by their own leaders. Chosen to lead a Muslim delegation, he put the Muslim case to the Viceroy and obtained a promise that their rights and interests would be safeguarded which established the principle of 'separate electorates' for Muslims and Hindus and was the first step towards an independent Muslim state.

Only a strong central Muslim organisation could maintain the impetus. The Aga Khan and his friends founded the Muslim



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League and turned it into a political force. He became the first President and pressed the Muslim case wherever he could until Morley warned him: 'You mustn't get too much power, you know!' Indeed, when the reforms came into force as the Indian Councils Act of 1907, they did not take Hindus or Muslims very far towards self-government.

Defying the leisurely pace of the period, the Aga Khan commuted between India and Europe. One day he was in Bombay crossing swords with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a young lawyer and (non-practising) fellow Ismaili who thought separate electorates would divide the nation; the next he was in London arguing with Winston Churchill. He could not foresee that Winston would one day 'refuse to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire', while Qaid-i-Azam (Great Leader) Jinnah would be hailed as the founder of Pakistan.

The strain of this kind of life was beginning to tell. The Aga Khan's eyesight was poor, his heart weak but he would not spare himself. While visiting the Viceroy in Simla, he collapsed and was ordered to take a rest which to him meant only one thing—travel. Accompanied by a French friend, he headed East and visited Malaya and Singapore. He went on to China, a 'crumbling empire'. In Shanghai he was entertained to a splendid meal prepared by a Chinese Muslim—several Ismaili groups were living in China and some of them are still there but, like those in Russia, cannot communicate with their Imam.

After a brief visit to Japan he reached Honolulu which, at a time when it was neither a tourist centre nor a military base, struck him as a haven of absolute peace and happiness. His next stop was San Francisco which was still in ruins after the catastrophic earthquake of 1906 and he was glad to move on to New York where he was a great social hit, went to scores of parties, visited museums, theatres and the Metropolitan Opera—music and ballet were his favourite aesthetic experiences.

Most mornings he could be seen in the Criminal Court listening to the sensational trial of Harry K. Thaw, the millionaire husband of the beautiful Evelyn Nesbit. Until he himself told the story few people were aware that he knew Evelyn. He had met her in London at a dinner party some years earlier and was talking to her when a



friend took him aside and warned him that her husband was violently jealous and that it was perhaps not prudent to pay her too much attention.

The incident came back to his mind as he listened to the proceedings. Evelyn, it appeared, had confessed to her husband that, before their marriage, she had been drugged and seduced by the well-known architect, Sanford White. Coming face to face with White in the ballroom of Madison Square Roof Garden, Thaw had pulled a revolver and killed him. Observing the courtroom drama, the Aga Khan could not help thinking that something like that might easily have happened to him in London.

Restored to health, he returned to the South of France where he made friends with some of the finest contemporary talents—Stravinsky, Puccini and Massenet among them. Massenet once received him at his hotel sitting stark naked in his bath dictating music to a woman secretary. To the young balletomane's delight, Diaghilev allowed him to attend his rehearsals. He made Cannes his headquarters and sallied forth to cultural events all along the Côte d'Azur. What drew him to the Casino of Monte Carlo in the year 1907 was not the gaming rooms but the Ballet Opera of Monte Carlo under the same roof.

He became the Ballet's most enthusiastic supporter and it was not difficult to guess why. He never missed a performance when the cast included the handsome première danseuse whose name appeared in the programme as Theresa Magliano. Personal and artistic interest coincided, and it was not too difficult to find a mutual friend to introduce them. He soon learned that Ginetta, as Theresa called herself, came from an artistic Turin family. She was nineteen and at the beginning of her career. Her teachers predicted a great future for her—Monte Carlo was her first foreign engagement, a great opportunity to be noticed.

In the ten years since the Aga Khan's unhappy first marriage he had escorted some of Europe's most desirable women but none of his affairs had been serious. He was very serious now and Ginetta felt as strongly about him: 'We fell deeply in love,' he said simply. So sure was he about his feelings that he proposed only a few weeks after they first met. From the little pension where she shared rooms with two other girl dancers, he moved her to a suite in the Hôtel de



Paris, then left for Bombay to tell his mother that he proposed to make his home in Europe and marry a European woman.

He could not have chosen a less opportune moment. For the Aga Khan to take another wife at this stage—or for some time to come—would have advertised his estrangement from Shahzadi just when a vicious family feud between his and her immediate relatives was coming to a head in the courts of Bombay. In essence, the challenge to the Aga Khan and his mother was almost identical with the old Khoja Case. As in 1866, the dispute was largely about finance and once more the history and the background of the Imam's relations with the community came under public scrutiny. The case arose from the purge of the hangers-on, who, reluctant to give up their sinecures, constructed a claim with arguments designed to embarrass the Aga Khan and damage him in the eyes of the community.

His principal adversary was Shahzadi's sister, Haji Bibi, daughter of Aga Jangi Shah whose murder had shaken the community ten years earlier. The 'Haji Bibi' case was as difficult to follow as the Khoja Case. Although all claims against the Aga Khan had long been renounced on her behalf, she and other relatives demanded a share of the community's property and the Imam's income as of right. They were no more likely to succeed than the plaintiffs in the Khoja Case.

For the outsider, the main interest centred on the public discussion of the Imam's financial relations with the community. For the first time, the technicalities of *zakat* were revealed to the eyes of unbelievers. Witnesses recited a long list of rituals and ceremonies for which he was entitled to receive fees. It started with followers, twice or three times a day, bringing sweetmeats, fruit and food for Hazar Imam which were put up for auction to the highest bidder who paid up saying: 'This is the property of Hazar Imam.' Ismailis (Khojas) made payments when assembling for special prayers and, when the collecting box was handed round in the *jamatkhana*, paid the Dassoona—two annas in the rupee.

But marriage fees (a percentage of the dowry or the cost of the dowry) were—and still are—paid to the Imam for the use of the *jamatkhana*, the *mukhi* often providing refreshments and even transport for the guests. Fees to mark the birth of a child, bigger for a boy than a girl, largely went to cover similar expenses. The Imam was entitled to a fee for death ceremonies but this might go towards



the cost of the coffin, the burial place, the undertaker and the religious service. In the spiritual sense, a family's payments made after a relative's burial were to ensure that his soul rested in peace, a practice borrowed from the ancient Greeks who placed a coin in the mouth of their dead to pay their fare across the River Styx.

Payments when Hazar Imam comes to the *jamatkhana*, payments on the seventh day of the month when followers fast from six to ten a.m., payments when Hazar Imam names a child, payments at the ceremony of Sir Bundi (literal meaning: offering of the head) when a faithful puts his property at the disposal of the Imam while the Elders magnanimously save him from too great a sacrifice and fix a price at which it can be bought back, the money going to the Imam. The Judge went to see for himself: 'We sat on chairs,' he described the ceremony, 'in front of a raised seat or throng on which the Aga Khan sits when he attends the *jamatkhana*. The whole room was filled with Khojas seated or kneeling on the ground, in another room the women of the community . . . a most impressive sight owing to the reverence with which the whole proceedings were conducted.'

As the trial went on not much reverence was shown by the Aga Khan's opponents in court. Witnesses tried to spread as much dirt as possible, rouse religious feelings, repeat every damaging rumour and injure the Aga Khan in every way. So outrageous was some of the testimony that Mr Justice Russell cleared the court on more than one occasion. Some of the witnesses were not too particular about the truth either: 'As regards the ladies,' the Judge said, referring to some of them, 'I could not see their faces as they were covered from head to foot in black dominoes with white pieces of muslin let in across the face. But one has only to read the evidence . . . to see how full of inconsistencies and untruths it is.'

The main issue was almost completely submerged by the petty quibbles the other side raised. The history of every Aga Khan bungalow in Poona, Bangalore and Bombay was traced back, mostly on the basis of hearsay; each piece of family jewellery was discussed; the amounts some relatives had received as allowances from the Aga Khan were analysed. The acid atmosphere was reflected in attacks on the Judge who had to defend himself against the insinuation that he could not be expected to hand down a fair verdict because he



was friendly with the Aga Khan, had been his guest at dinner and had entertained him in his own house: 'The same could probably be said about every judge in Bombay,' the Aga Khan's Counsel remarked.

At the end of the long proceedings the Judge was left to decide 128 specific points. He answered the question whether the offerings and presents made to the first and second Aga Khans were their absolute property with a firm 'Yes'. Was Haji Bibi, or any member of the family, entitled to any interest in such property? The Judge said equally firmly: 'No'.

The key question was whether the offerings and presents the Aga Khan was receiving from his followers were given to him as 'the Hazar Imam and in consequence of the veneration and devotion of the Shia Imami Ismailis to his person'. The Judge's answer was 'Yes'. In every one of the 128 points the verdict went in the Aga Khan's favour. His legal triumph was complete and, except for an occasional little local difficulty, the Imam's right to *zakat* was never challenged. It developed into a kind of church tax, most of which is invested in schools, health and community centres. As in the times of the Prophet and his *baitumal* (Treasury), which was filled by contributions from his followers, Ismailis pay *zakat* (two and a half per cent of their income) and *khums* (ten per cent) voluntarily and directly to the Imam. The Haji Bibi Case anchored this arrangement in modern law.

Not wanting to rub the noses of the losers in the dust by a public announcement of his divorce and a spectacular second marriage, the Aga Khan bade farewell to the splendour of Malabar Hill and his palace in Poona with the sweet mango trees in the grounds (the fruit was sent to him wherever he went), returned to Europe, the Côte d'Azur and Ginetta, for whom he bought a house in the rue Bel Respiro overlooking the Casino. He named it 'Villa Ginetta'.

Writing about the events of 1908 and his great love for 'Mlle Theresa Magliano', the Aga Khan recounted the next move: 'In the spring of that year she accompanied me to Egypt and we were married in Cairo in accordance with Muslim law.' His marriage brought him great happiness—he called it 'spiritual and mental satisfaction'—and those who met him and Ginetta thought they made a splendid couple.



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But in view of the situation in Bombay, it was all done so quietly, almost stealthily, that some of the Aga Khan's friends refused to believe that a marriage had actually taken place, and if they were thinking in terms of a European marriage they were, of course, quite right. Almost sixty years later, Leonard Slater, an American writer investigating the life and death of Prince Aly Khan, quoted official documents in which Ginetta, long after 1908, was described as 'Theresa Magliano' and as 'nubile' (unmarried). But things were not as simple as all that.

A Roman Catholic country abiding by the laws of the Vatican, Italy did not recognise the marriage of an Italian Roman Catholic which was not solemnised in church (Sophia Loren's marital tribulations show that nothing has changed in half a century). A Muslim marriage contract concluded in Cairo had certainly little chance of finding favour in the eyes of Italian officials. That the intended husband had another wife or was divorced finally ruled legal marriage for an Italian subject out of court. In Italy the Aga Khan might even have laid himself open to an indictment for bigamy. The position in France in these days was not so very different.

The reason why the owner of 'Villa Ginetta' figured in the local land register as 'Theresa Magliano' was that the Aga Khan had put the house in his bride's name before they went to Cairo. This was also the case with regard to another villa he was building for her at Cimiez, Nice, where he had stayed on his first visit to Europe. It was a temple for their favourite muse and he called it 'Villa Terpsichore'.

Untroubled by complications, whether in Italy or in India, Ginetta was expecting her first baby. For the Aga Khan the birth of a son in the following year was a joyful event. To have a male heir was no less important to an Imam in modern times than throughout Ismaili history. He named the boy Mohammed Mahdi but his mother and her Italian relatives called him Giuseppe.

Oriental husbands were not in the habit of attending on their wives for days and weeks on end. The Aga Khan was no exception. As he continued to travel the world, Ginetta was often lonely, although her brother Mario and her two sisters frequently stayed with her. She was devoted to the baby but missed her dancing and, as an outlet for her artistic temperament, took up sculpture. When her



husband was with her, her happiness was complete but his sojourns in Monte Carlo or Cimiez were brief.

The deteriorating political situation in Europe and the Near East kept him busier than ever. German influence in Turkey was on the increase and it worried him to see a Muslim country moving into the anti-British camp. Western statesmen were glad to know that he was pleading their cause and, although some Muslims frowned on his pro-British outlook, he went to Constantinople to do what he could to preserve peace. The Turks were as intransigent as the British, tempers in the Balkans were getting shorter and a bloody conflict seemed inevitable.

One of his trips to England was in the line of a sad duty: 'In May 1910,' the Aga Khan wrote later, 'my great and good friend King Edward VII died in London.' The assembled crowned heads were bickering about status and seniority; quizzically he watched the Kaiser and the Kings of Greece, Spain and Bulgaria competing for places of honour in the funeral procession.

From Bombay came the sad news of the death of his old friend Aga Shamsuddin, one of the last few links with his early youth. An even more grievous loss was imminent. Before reaching his second birthday, little Mohammed Mahdi died of meningitis. Father and mother were disconsolate but at least she was expecting another baby. Desperately anxious to protect the new arrival against all risks, the Aga Khan sent his wife to her native Turin where she could be with her family and have the constant attention of a top-class gynaecologist. He installed her in a big flat in the fashionable Corso Oporto where, on June 13, 1911, her second son was born.

The Aga Khan received the news while attending the Coronation of King George V in London. Although he was not there to see the baby, his birth was, as he put it, a great solace and joy to his wife and himself. The mother had a difficult time and the baby was not strong but he would not be lacking the fondest care and the best medical attention. There was another complication. Because no official evidence of a wedding was available—at least none that would have been accepted as legal in Italy—the baby's birth certificate, embarrassingly, described the mother as 'Teresa Magliano, unmarried 22 years old, living on independent means' and the father as 'His Highness The Aga Khan, son of the late Aga Ali



Shah, 34 years old, born at Karachi (British India), living at Monte Carlo'. The boy was given the name Aly Salomone Khan.

In later years, ill-wishers suggested surreptitiously that Prince Aly Khan was of illegitimate birth because his father and mother were not legally married when he was born. Friends countered helpfully that it was all above board because the Aga Khan had concluded a *mut'a* marriage—*mut'a* marriages were first practised by Muslim warriors who were separated from their wives for long periods but were permitted to enter into temporary associations (*mut'a*) with one or more other women for a night or a week or even longer.

Both the insinuation against the marriage and the well-meaning defence were ill-founded. As the highest religious and legal authority in his Community, the Aga Khan could, if he so wished, legalise his own marriage whatever the circumstances. If his first marriage was an obstacle, he only needed to tell his wife: 'I divorce thee' and the marriage was ended, but there was no evidence that he had done so. He could take a second bride by telling her: 'I take thee as my wife' and they were legally married, which is what he did in Cairo—where a Muslim is concerned, many countries recognise the law as it is practised in the land of his origin. Although some Muslim writers (among them Mr Asaf A. A. Fyzee, writing in the Aga Khan Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Book, 1945) have claimed that '*mut'a* (temporary marriage) . . . is, according to Ismaili Law, altogether unlawful . . .' the Aga Khan himself, supreme arbiter of Ismaili religious practices, obviously did not concur because he mentioned in his Will that he had married his second wife 'by *mut'a* marriage'.

Even in the Aga Khan's frantically busy travels, few periods were quite as crowded as the first year of Aly's life. The Coronation in London gave him an opportunity to discuss the dangerous trends in the Balkans with several statesmen. More than anything he wanted to prevent a conflict between Britain and a Muslim country and spare the Muslims of Turkey an unnecessary war. His support for the British Empire never wavered and one of his hobby horses was the potential of Indian manpower which could be summoned to defend it in the event of war: 'India could put troops into South Africa as quickly as they could be sent from England,' he wrote prophetically in a 1911 issue of the National Review. 'She could



land soldiers in Australia long before England could do so; and forces from India could reach western Canada almost as soon as from England.' He wanted the myriads of India to be taught that they were guardians and supporters of the Crown just as the white citizens of the Empire: 'India and the self-governing dominions stand and fall together!'

His range of interests was as wide as ever. He joined the Maharajah of Patiala in organising the first All-India cricket eleven to visit England—they lost fifteen matches, won six and started a tradition which is still going strong. His campaign for the Aligarh University required a final big heave and, as chairman of the fund-raising committee, he went on a collecting tour through India's main Muslim areas: 'As a mendicant,' he announced, 'I am now going out to beg from house to house and from street to street for the children of Indian Muslims.' It was a triumphal tour. Wherever he went, people unharnessed the horses of his carriage and pulled it themselves for miles. He collected 'rupees thirty lakhs'—three million rupees—of which 100,000 were contributed by him. For decades, whenever the University was in need of funds, he made new donations and persuaded others to give generously.

The year 1912 brought the historic Coronation Durbar when the new King-Emperor met the people of India at their new capital Delhi, the only British sovereign to visit the Dominion during the period of British rule. The ceremonies were the most colourful ever staged, but owing to some disaster in the kitchen, the great state banquet provided food only for the King and a handful of guests sitting near him; the rest went hungry. During the investiture in a brilliantly lit tent (to add to his titles of Knight and Grand Knight Commander of the Indian Empire, the Aga Khan was made a Knight Grand Commander of the Order of the Star of India) an electric bulb burst and others began to flicker. For an instant it was thought fire might break out and engulf the elevated company. Whistles blew and fire engines were cranked up but panic was avoided and the lights and the excitement settled down.

Although not much in evidence himself in his family circle, the Aga Khan made sure that Ginetta and the baby were surrounded by comfort and luxury worthy of their status. He was concerned about his son's health and had a new idea for his welfare almost every



week. Might the boy and his mother not benefit from the mountain air of the Italian Alps? Was not the climate in Normandy more conducive to the child's well-being? He took a summer house in Deauville, 'Villa Gorizia', bought a Paris town house in the rue de Prony, and yet another residence at Maisons Lafitte, not far from the capital.

Almost before he could walk, Aly was taught to ride a horse; he learned to swim and was introduced to tennis as soon as his little hand gripped a racket. But he lacked the company of other children; instead his uncle Mario spent much time with him and remained a close companion of Aly's in later life. Alfredo, the Italian chauffeur, was another of his 'playmates'. Ginetta was happiest in her studio, exhibited some fine sculptures under the name of Yla, an anagram of her son's name, and received several important commissions, one of them for a fountain statue in Vienna. (Though he was born more than ten years after her death, her grandson Prince Karim inherited her talent as a sculptor.) Her art was her life and she rarely accompanied her husband on his social and diplomatic rounds. But when she appeared in public, Princess Theresa's lively beauty, haute couture elegance and magnificent jewels were the talk of Deauville and Paris.

Moving easily among the European élite, the Aga Khan was so much part of the western scene that his eastern origins and connections tended to be overlooked. He never forgot them for a moment: 'My way of life,' he wrote at one time, 'has taken me from the slowly changing East to the West which is ever-swiftly changing. The work I have to do keeps me, for the most time, in Europe and on the move. I am a pacifist and an internationalist. Yet I belong to no country in the West but only to many people in the East. My skin, my religion, my taste in food, my way of thinking—all these make me differ profoundly from the people among whom I move.'

His health was precarious but his love of golf triumphed. Whenever he was in London, he could be seen early in the morning emerging from the Ritz Hotel in his white sports outfit bound for one golf course or another. His increasing weight worried the doctors but his energetic travels were as much exercise as any man could be expected to take. He always carried a little instrument with him, a watch and compass combined, which told him the time and



the direction to Mecca. Every Friday, wherever he was, he turned towards the holy city of Islam and spent an hour in meditation and prayer: 'That hour is my greatest hour!' he used to say.

But his prayers for peace in the Balkans remained unanswered. The strains and stresses of so many people—Greeks, Serbs, Bulgars, Turks—jostling in a narrow space meant that power politics and rival alliances were liable to erupt at any moment. Behind the scenes the Aga Khan did what he could on behalf of his fellow Muslims in the old Ottoman Empire which had become the 'Sick Man of Europe'. He travelled to Russia, and in his memoirs which he dictated to the late John Connell some forty years later, described his leisurely progress in St Petersburg and Moscow. Reticent about the really important things—reticence remains the predominant Ismaili characteristic—he wrote about overheated palaces rather than the rising political temperatures on Russia's borders, dwelling on them lovingly as if he sensed that they would be destroyed in the impending world conflagration together with much else.

In Moscow he was shocked by the poverty around him and described the gulf between rich and poor as 'truly appalling'. Unlike many other wealthy men he had a strong sense of social justice and genuine compassion. His feeling was that such contrasts created pressures which could not be bottled up for long. Even so his sense of humour did not desert him. In a Moscow public steam bath he saw women attendants looking after male visitors, passing the soap and towels and acting as masseuses. They were elderly and so ugly, he commented, that it was utterly impossible to imagine the slightest misbehaviour with them.

While he was in Moscow, the situation in the Balkans came to a head. In October 1912, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece went to war against Turkey, which was also at loggerheads with Italy and emerged severely mauled from a short sharp burst of fighting, unable to continue the war. Bulgaria and Serbia agreed to an armistice but hostilities between Turkey and Greece continued. The Aga Khan returned hurriedly to India where tempers were on edge and Muslims wanted to go to the aid of the Turks. He and his friends protested against Britain's 'delicate but chilly policy of non-intervention' but the British government turned a deaf ear. There was little he could do for the Turks and he found himself in a serious



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dilemma. While his fellow Muslims, feeling that the honour and integrity of Islam were at stake, advocated a *jihad*, a holy war, he realised the futility of asking the Turks to fight on and opposed such a move. When he said so in an interview with the *Times of India* many Muslims were angry.

A peace conference was convened in London, broke up and was re-convened and produced a treaty which imposed considerable territorial losses on the Turks. There was a *coup d'état* in Constantinople followed by a second Balkan war. It was a confusing conflict. First the Bulgarians attacked Serbian and Greek positions, then Rumania joined Turkey against Bulgaria, which was quickly defeated. Albania was invaded by the Serbs and the Turks recovered some of their territory. The Austrians intervened, a German general was appointed Turkish commander-in-chief—Turkey's alliance with Britain's enemies was almost complete.

By this time the Aga Khan was in the Middle East, another explosive conglomerate of races, religions and alliances. On a rare visit to Syria, he found some of his leading followers at loggerheads. The Joundi family sprouted two wings, one religious, one political, fiercely competing for one Ismaili seat in parliament. The religious Joundis won, the community was split and the Aga Khan's attempt to mediate failed because Arab feuds are not easily abandoned. The two factions were never reconciled and fifty years later the ancient quarrel affected Prince Aly Khan even after his death.



CHAPTER V

THE Aga Khan's apartment at the Ritz was a beehive of activity. Visitors came and went in an unending stream to be swallowed up by the social scene in London's premier hotel. Some of the British diplomats among them were content to remain anonymous because of their mission which was to solicit the Aga Khan's help for some of the more delicate and secret services important personages like him could render a country in time of international tension. He was more than willing. Envoys of several countries followed emissaries from his 'spiritual children' in many parts of the world who wanted to hear his views and his wishes in case of an emergency.

As the situation was visibly deteriorating and Europe was drifting towards war, he had two main concerns. It was probably too late to prevent the impending conflagration but important to strengthen the British Empire with which his personal interest, much of his property, indeed his whole life were bound up. He was even more concerned with the well-being of his millions of followers who depended on his guidance. What was said of the British Empire in those days also applied to the Aga Khan's religious realm—the sun never set on it. In Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa, war would confront them with a deadly peril. He was anxious to visit those at the most distant end of the long lines of communication which would become precarious as soon as the first shot was fired.

Time was short, and he was in a hurry. His first destination was Burma, still under India Office rule, where mounting nationalism threatened to isolate his community. In Rangoon, he gathered Ismaili leaders around him and laid down a new policy for his followers to take account of the changing conditions. He ordered them to adapt themselves to local customs, give up their strange-



sounding Indo-Saracenic names, wear Burmese clothes, speak the Burmese language and become Burmese in all but their religious beliefs. It was a historic decision. His directives to Burmese Ismailis in the early months of 1914 created the pattern for relations between Ismailis and indigenous populations and worked for their mutual benefit. Ismailis everywhere adopted the nationality and became loyal subjects of the countries in which they lived.

The Imam's next destination was East Africa but while he was on the high seas Austria's Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by a Serb in the little Balkan town of Sarajevo. Repercussions were bound to be grave; they were not long delayed. The news that Austria was marching against Serbia to punish her for the political outrage and that Russia was coming to Serbia's aid reached the Aga Khan in Zanzibar.

The fire spread quickly. The Germans intervened, declared war on Russia and moved into neutral Belgium. On August 4, England declared war on Germany—peace all but vanished from this earth. The Aga Khan went to see the British Resident in Zanzibar and offered his services to the British Government. He was preparing to take the next boat out of Mombasa but was warned that a German sea raider was operating in the Indian Ocean and advised to travel to England via South Africa. To leave no doubt about his sentiments, he returned the insignia of his German decorations to the Kaiser.

Never had a voyage seemed so slow. Arriving in London at long last, the Aga Khan told the Press that he would not mind joining an Indian regiment as a private soldier but his old friend Lord Kitchener, now Secretary of State for War, had more useful employment in mind for the Aga Khan's special talents. Allied to Germany, Turkey was at war with England, France, Serbia and Russia and was trying to rally Muslims in a Pan-Islamic movement against the Empire and the Western allies. Once more there was talk of a holy war and Indian troops, many Muslims among them, fighting with the British found themselves confronted with mullahs sent out by Turkey to persuade them to desert.

The Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean—the Empire's lifelines—were under grave threat if Turkey's campaign succeeded. Only a leading Muslim of the Aga Khan's



calibre, Lord Kitchener said, could help to foil this plot and counter-act the dangerous propaganda. After a conference with Lord Kitchener, the Aga Khan saw Prime Minister Asquith and was received by the King who was well informed on the intricate subject.

Although he was not entirely uncritical of British policy towards Turkey, the Aga Khan got his influential Muslim friends together to support an appeal to Muslims everywhere not to follow the Turkish call for a *jihad*. He described the Ottoman government as a tool of Germany's aggressive, imperialist strategy: 'Our only duty as Muslims,' the manifesto concluded, 'is to remain loyal, faithful and obedient to our temporal and secular allegiance.'

British confidence in the Aga Khan proved justified. The idea of a *jihad* collapsed, India's Muslims remained loyal to the Aga Khan—and the British Empire. An even more delicate task awaited him, this time in Egypt, nominally part of the Ottoman Empire but, since 1882, under 'temporary' British occupation. The Aga Khan's own account of his mission suffers from excessive tact towards the former Khedive, Abbas Hilmi, who largely created the situation which required his attention but who became his friend some years later.

Suspected of pro-German machinations, Abbas Hilmi was called to London but got no nearer than Paris and finally turned up in Constantinople. His moves created confusion in Cairo about the Muslim attitude to the war, and the Aga Khan's mission was to stabilise opinion and explain the allied cause. In Cairo the Palace was hostile. Prince Fuad, the future King, together with some of the princes and ministers, had strong German and Italian affiliations. The Aga Khan's best policy was to win over the powerful Muslim teachers of Al Azhar University, and who better to accomplish that than the descendant of the founders of their university? While Lawrence of Arabia worked among the sheikhs, the Aga Khan fought Britain's diplomatic battle in Cairo. That Egypt remained calm and stable when the war came close was largely due to his skill.

On a brief visit to Bombay, he found his mother busily helping the allied war effort, looking after Indian troops and working for the Red Cross, yet keeping a watchful eye on Ismaili affairs. The Imam attended to his religious and administrative duties before



returning to England to be greeted with a most welcome piece of news. As a reward for his services, the King conferred on him the right to an eleven-gun salute and the rank and precedence of a First Class Ruling Prince of the Bombay Presidency. In Imperial Britain no Indian could ask for more.

Presently it was suggested to him that he might make his headquarters in neutral Switzerland, an ideal base for a man with his international connections. He took a house in Zürich but had no sooner settled down when he found himself under attack on two fronts. Fellow Muslims criticised him for supporting Britain and helping to recruit Indian troops to fight against Turkish Muslims, and German agents who were thick on the Swiss ground naturally assumed that he was operating against German interests. The German Press launched a vicious campaign against him, while more sinister German plans were maturing. He had an inkling of what might befall when his cousin Aga Farrokh Shah was assassinated at the instigation of German agents while visiting Ismaili settlements in Kirman on his behalf. Now they seemed ready to rub him out.

The German attempt to rid themselves of a dangerous opponent came at a critical moment. The Aga Khan's health was giving him considerable trouble: 'I myself was laid low with a difficult, painful and protracted illness,' he wrote in his autobiography. His sight deteriorated and his eyes suffered damage which proved to be permanent. His pulse was irregular and, though he was eating normally, he was losing weight rapidly. A French physician diagnosed Graves' Disease, which affects the thyroid gland, and advised him to consult a famous Swiss specialist.

The Germans did not believe that their quarry was really ill and moved in for the kill: 'With typical German thoroughness,' as he put it, they had a bomb thrown at him and, to make doubly sure, arranged to have his coffee poisoned. The bomb did not go off and the Aga Khan did not drink the coffee. Under the glare of publicity, the Swiss police investigated the two attempts.

For the Aga Khan it was a difficult time. Although he was physically at a low ebb he spent much of his enforced seclusion drafting an account of political developments in India which, in a way, was a reply to those who called him a British imperialist and suggested that his activities were not in the best interests of Muslims.



But it was also a blueprint for the future in which he visualised India as an integral part of a South Asian Federation reaching from Malaya to Egypt.

While he was quietly working away in his study, the noise about his alleged activities and the German attempts on his life grew louder until it reached a new crescendo with the arrest of three suspects. The British authorities were embarrassed: 'All the British government saw fit to do,' the Aga Khan remarked with some bitterness, 'was to request me to leave Switzerland.' He gave up the house in Zürich but instead of returning to London decided to see the war out in his Paris residence.

His condition was still causing considerable anxiety. His eighteen months under the shadow of death—from bombs, poison and natural causes—had left a deep mark. A hundred medical remedies must have been tried when a new investigation revealed that the original diagnosis had been wrong. A fresh line of treatment began to show results and put him on the slow road to recovery. But as long as he lived, plagued by new infirmities, constantly under the care of doctors, he would never again meekly accept the verdict of even the most eminent authority without demanding the most detailed explanation. Every doctor who henceforth treated him was subjected to a barrage of questions about his diagnosis and his suggested treatment. His troubled health became the source of his fabulous familiarity with every therapy under the sun, which turned him into the world's medically most knowledgeable patient.

Between 1916 and 1918, while war restricted his movements and illness confined him to his rooms, Ginetta saw more of him than at any other time. They were together in Paris or in Maisons Lafitte, and little Aly, too, though his august father remained a remote figure, felt not quite so overawed in his presence. Whenever the boy was taken from Cimiez to Deauville, he visited 'Papa' who always questioned him thoroughly about his progress.

Aly was not too sure of himself. A succession of young tutors, Swiss or French, taught him as much as he would absorb but he was no keener on his books than most boys of his age and easily tired of a subject. French and Italian came naturally to him and he was making good progress in English. An Ismaili scholar acquainted him with the rudiments of Islamic history and the basic tenets of his



father's sect. As the first-born, important religious duties would eventually fall to him but the Aga Khan remembered the ordeal of his own boyhood too well to allow his son to be subjected to a high-pressure education.

The boy was moody, sometimes high-spirited, sometimes lost in a world of fantasies. But he had an easy charm and a way of endearing himself with people. His father encouraged him to take exercise, swim and ride. Aly's favourite tutor was Monsieur Edmond Grin, a personable, talented young man who was father, elder brother and friend to him. When Grin left the household to start a teaching career Aly took a tearful farewell of his beloved 'Professor'. When they met again in the mid-fifties Grin was Rector of the University of Lausanne.

The book on which the Aga Khan had been working was published in 1918 under the title 'India in Transition'. Emerging from his sick room after a long absence from active politics, he joined the peace-makers who were mixing cures for a war-sick world at their conferences in and around Paris. The Versailles Treaty between the western allies and the Germans which was about to be signed inspired the Aga Khan with little confidence. India was in a difficult situation and his suggestion for a Commonwealth of Asian states in association with Britain was unlikely to be adopted. Instead of swift progress towards responsible government in India, prolonged deliberations only produced recommendations for harsh measures against political agitation and sedition which provoked a hostile reaction. India was restive and on the brink of the same troubles that afflicted Ireland.

Although demonstrations were banned, there were many 'unlawful gatherings' in Indian cities. In the course of one, in the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on April 19, 1919, police fired into the crowd and 379 people were killed. It was a grave setback but the Aga Khan tried hard to calm tempers and encourage negotiations. He joined the members of the Indian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, lobbied British politicians and was in constant touch with Mr Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India.

As if to make up for the accident of history which ranged him against Muslim Turkey in the war, he took up the cudgels on her behalf but found British policy as hostile to Turkey as ever. The



country's dismemberment was to be sealed by the Treaty of Sèvres, but Kemal Atatürk, the new Turkish leader, refused to submit. At this critical moment the Greek army invaded Asia Minor to liberate Greeks under Turkish rule, captured Smyrna and marched deep into Turkish territory. Britain and France sent expeditions to secure footholds in this troubled part of the world and a big row developed over British claims to an insignificant little city called Chanak.

It testified to the Aga Khan's skill and instinct that, in the face of strong anti-Turkish sentiments, he managed to secure the help of a most powerful political campaigner—Lord Beaverbrook, the Canadian multi-millionaire, who turned the London *Daily Express* into a vital and highly successful newspaper. The Aga Khan could not have wished for a more sympathetic ally: 'In the Graeco-Turkish conflict,' Lord Beaverbrook wrote in 'Politicians and the Press', 'with Britain backing the Greeks, nothing could be foreseen but disaster.'

In August 1922, Lord Beaverbrook visited Deauville: 'At the Royal Hotel there,' he recounted, 'his Highness Prince Aga Khan discussed with me the disastrous character of the relations of the British government with the *de facto* Turkish government.' Lord Beaverbrook did not conduct his campaigns from the ivory tower of his private office but decided to go to Angora (Ankara) and discover what the real intentions and terms of the new Turkish government were. With the Aga Khan acting as intermediary he made arrangements for a meeting with Kemal but also suggested that it would be a good thing if Mr Churchill and Lord Birkenhead met the Turkish leader.

To tell the British government how strongly they felt about the Turkish question, India's Muslims sent a mission to London which included the Aga Khan. They were received by Mr Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, to whom they put the case for the return of Thrace and Smyrna to Turkey. When they had had their say, Lloyd George—according to an account by Sheikh Mushir Hosain Kidwai, a member of the mission—asked bluntly: 'Now that the Greeks are in military possession who will turn them out from there?' Unable to restrain himself, the Aga Khan jumped up, wagged a finger at Lloyd George and said: 'Well, Mr Prime Minister, old though I am, I will go sword in hand and turn them out. We



will charter ships, we will do everything. Leave them to us.' Mr Lloyd George was thunderstruck: 'No, no, we cannot do that!' he murmured.

But strong anti-Turkish forces in Britain rallied to resist all this pressure. Lord Curzon frowned on the joint activities of the British press lord and the Imam of the Ismailis, and the conservative press published alarming accounts of their movements. The Turks themselves relieved the gallant couple from further exertions on their behalf. Taking matters into their own hands they put an end to the presence of some three million Greeks in Asia Minor. Smyrna was burned down and Greeks who were not massacred got away with little more than their lives.

How the Aga Khan, who was constantly in the political limelight, managed to squeeze his ample religious and private activities into a bursting timetable remained for ever a mystery to his friends. Even in Europe he was constantly commuting between London and his houses in Deauville, Paris and the Côte d'Azur. Conferences in Lausanne and Geneva demanded his presence and, as if this was not enough, he was also fond of snatching a few days' rest and privacy at Aix-les-Bains, not only to take the waters but to enjoy the air and the scenery. Among his many friends in Aix were the Carron sisters, Marcelle and Jane-Andrée, daughters of a local hotel manager. Andrée, who was eighteen when he first knew her, often used to accompany him on long walks or drives in the foothills of the Haute Savoie. Later Marcelle moved to Paris and worked at a fashion house, Salon Guérin, where the Aga Khan's wife bought many of her clothes. Andrée was also working in Paris and he helped them to open their own establishment, Maison Carron-Sœurs. It enabled him to see much more of Andrée. As he said when their friendship became public property, he had known her on and off for nearly a dozen years.

Four years of war without racing had whetted the Aga Khan's appetite and he rarely missed a meeting. Horses to him were precious creatures: 'Nothing,' he said, 'is more poetic than a man riding a beautiful horse, riding it to perfection, the man and the horse, like a centaur, carved out as one.' To talk about horses was one of his favourite pastimes.

Gradually the idea of racing in England and France which he had



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nursed since his very first visit began to materialise. The decision came in the spring of 1921 and was the start of an important chapter in racing history: 'I was dining at a friend's house in London,' he recalled, 'and my neighbour was Mrs Asquith, one of Lord Oxford's daughters-in-law, who was the sister of Mrs George Lambton . . .' They talked about horses all through dinner and Mrs Asquith suggested that he should start racing in England and get in touch with the Hon. George Lambton who could help with training or management: 'It was like a trigger being drawn on a cannon,' said the Aga Khan.

Lambton came to see him at the Ritz and agreed to start buying mares for an Aga Khan stud. Through Lambton, the new recruit to English racing met Richard Dawson, trainer of the Derby and Grand National winners of 1903, and engaged him. In a parallel operation in Paris, he secured the services of the American trainer William Duke who helped him to buy French horses at Deauville: 'The result of one chance dinner party affinity,' the Aga Khan mused, 'led to my becoming engaged up to my neck with horse breeding, bloodstocks and with it, naturally, cattle breeding and farming in Ireland and France.'

Although cautious with money, the Aga Khan was prepared to spend up to £100,000 in three years to build up a top-class racing stable. Richard Dawson looked after his horses at Whatcombe in Berkshire. Soon all eyes were on them. Among Lambton's first purchases was Cos, who cost 5,000 guineas and promptly won the Queen Mary Stakes at Ascot bringing in nearly twice the amount in stake money.

The Aga and George Lambton were at the Doncaster sales early in 1922 when a grey Sledmere filly came up for sale. She was a daughter of the Tetrarch and the Aga Khan would not allow himself to be outbid. When the filly went to him for 9,100 guineas, cheap at the price, he christened her Mumtaz Mahal, after Emperor Shah Jahan's favourite wife who lies buried in the grandiose Taj Mahal. On his visits to Whatcombe, he admired her dappled grey coat, fine shoulders, strong legs and powerful quarters and watched her going out on her training gallops accompanied by a stable companion without whom she was never happy.

Not satisfied with the Tetrarch's daughter, he also bought his



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son, Salmon Trout, paying 3,500 guineas and his faith in both horses was splendidly rewarded. The fastest filly the turf had ever known, Mumtaz Mahal ('flying filly', 'spotted wonder') won every race but one that season and carried the Aga Khan's colours in the Queen Mary Stakes past the winning post ten lengths ahead of her nearest rival. Her amazing turn of speed was the talk of the town and, though she ran only one more season, brought her owner £14,000 in stake money before retiring to stud.

There was no holding the Aga Khan now. He gave instructions to find him a suitable home for his stud in Ireland and settled on a place in the Curragh, Co. Kildare, which he named Sheshoon. He also bought another French farm at Marly-le-Ville—it was only a beginning. Although he could command expert advice, he owed many of his successes as breeder and owner to his uncanny instinct. George Criticos—'George of the Ritz'—the hall porter to whom the Aga Khan took a great liking and who acted as his cashier, private secretary and factotum in London, mentioned how His Highness on one occasion asked him to cable George Lambton to buy a horse called Papyrus. The Aga Khan was finally advised against the purchase but the horse won the 1923 Derby.

When on the continent, the Aga Khan often sent instructions to his stables through George Criticos, and George, in turn, telephoned him details of races in which his horses were involved. So fond was the Aga Khan of the Ritz concierge that he named a horse after him, Criticos—it did not come up to scratch and was soon sold. He even asked George to spend his holidays at the Deauville house. George proudly preserved a cutting from a London newspaper which reported in its gossip column: 'Mr George Criticos, head porter of the Ritz Hotel in London, is staying as the guest of the Aga Khan in Deauville. He is a cross between major-domo and grand vizier to the Persian potentate . . .'

In his biography of the Aga Khan, Stanley Jackson tells of a punter who told the Aga Khan: 'If you will give me a tip, Your Highness, I would willingly risk my shirt', to which the Aga Khan replied that the happiest man is often the one who has no shirt on his back. George Criticos says that he placed many bets on behalf of his famous patron whose usual stake was £500 but double the amount when he thought he was on to a good thing.



For young Aly, his father's racing interests opened up a new dimension and brought him new friends. Soon he was as fond of Dickie Dawson as he had been of Monsieur Grin. At Whatcombe, he tested his skill on a horse and proved that he was a worthy heir to the family tradition. Already he handled horses with great confidence and courage, perhaps too much courage. He was still very close to his mother (there were, incidentally, rumours that she and the Aga Khan had gone through a second, secret marriage ceremony). She was not in good health and it came as a shock to her when the Aga Khan decided that their son needed a spell in England to balance the Latin element in his mental make-up and the French influences of his environment at Cimiez or Deauville.

However painful the prospect of a long separation from Aly for the Begum, the Aga Khan's mind was made up. He was less certain about the kind of English education that would be best for the boy. Much as he admired English institutions, a public school was not necessarily the most useful preparation for the life ahead of Aly. Private tuition to prepare him for entrance to a university seemed much more suitable.

The next move was to ask friends at the India Office to suggest a man to take charge of Aly's education and they came up with a very good choice—Charles Waddington, ex-officer of the Indian Army and former principal of Mayo College at Ajmer where generations of Indian princes received their training as future rulers of their states. Waddington, who shared the Aga Khan's love of India and England and was living in retirement, agreed to take Aly under his wing at his fine Sussex country house and see that he was taught style, self-discipline, savoir faire rather than that he should have his head crammed with academic knowledge.

The routine at the Waddington house would be much the same as the curriculum to which English boarding schools subjected their boys. Aly would be instructed by tutors and spend his free time riding, swimming, playing tennis. Summer vacations would be spent with his mother in the South of France or in Deauville. During other holidays, Waddington's own children, two boys and one girl, home from their schools, would keep him company. One could not wish for a better arrangement.

For a little 'English gentleman' in the mould in which the Aga



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Khan hoped to shape his son, it was not unusual to suffer the pangs of separation from his loved ones which clouded Aly's life during his first few months at Sussex. But the warmth of his new surroundings, though well controlled, English-style, was no less comforting than the atmosphere in his mother's homes. Waddington grew genuinely fond of Aly whose charm became more evident as he grew older. He wanted to be liked, was pleasant and well mannered, but a restless streak and excess nervous energy found a happier outlet in physical activities than in desk work. He was good at games, prerequisite of successful adolescence in England, and fortunate in that his agile mind made up for what he lacked in application.

A great adventure was in store for him. Towards the end of 1923, the Aga Khan decided to take his wife and his son on their first visit to India. For Ginetta it was a tremendous event because she had never been at her husband's side when he faced his followers in the style to which the Imam was accustomed. For Aly it was a romantic expedition into the mysterious interior of his father's religious empire, but his first reaction was unexpected. Standing on deck as the ship approached the landing stage in Bombay, Aly looked out on the Khoja dignitaries assembled by the quayside to receive the Imam. The boy was not easily perplexed but their *jubas* (impressive crimson gold-embroidered gowns) and their *paqris* (golden turbans) puzzled him and he turned to his father: 'Why have so many magicians come here?' he asked. The grandiose palace at Malabar Hill, his venerable grandmother and her exotic court were pure fairyland, except that boys of twelve take naturally to fairyland.

Dressed in the style of a young Indian prince, Aly looked perfectly at home in the setting of his eastern forebears. And when it came to visiting the *jamatkhana* with the Imam, he was well-versed in the prayers and the ritual for which his Muslim teachers had prepared him and as familiar with Ismaili history as any Christian boy of his age with the Bible.

But the extravagance with which the ordinary Ismaili venerated his father made a deep impression. An oriental writer, Ibn Zul Quarnain, caught the spirit of one of the ceremonies in honour of the Aga Khan when he wrote: 'As far as the eye can see thousands are streaming across the countryside. At dawn the great pilgrimage began. Now it is late afternoon, yet still they come. Old men, young



men, poor men and rich men, the lame, the halt and the blind. Some barefooted and in filthy rags, others on mules and those who are very sick in rough litters. They have come at the bidding of their High Priest.

‘Presently a huge limousine slides silently between the waiting thousands and from it steps an imposing figure in flowing Kashmir shawl robes and a Persian lamb headdress. A sigh, as soft as an evening breeze, runs through the immense throng who fall on their knees, their lips moving in silent prayer. Rose petals thrown by devoted worshipping hands fall like gentle rain, and slowly the broad figure lifts one arm above his head to bless them. Silently he blesses them. Then, as suddenly as he came, he is gone and behind him he leaves the multitude rejoicing; for have they not fulfilled the life dream of every true Ismaili? Have they not been privileged to set their humble eyes on the mighty Aga Khan, direct descendant of Allah’s greatest Prophet?’

Among his followers, the Aga Khan, an impressive figure at all times, seemed to grow even further in stature, made decisions and gave guidance with immense authority. The inspiration he derived from his office as Imam distinguished him from other men and was impossible to explain except in terms of Sufist mysticism, part of the Ismaili creed: ‘I am convinced,’ he said, ‘that many Muslims . . . and that I myself have had moments of enlightenment and of knowledge of a kind which we cannot communicate because it is something given and not something acquired.’

In this spirit he tackled the problems of his followers with the knowledge and insight which are the Imam’s gift. He was in constant correspondence with the heads of his widely scattered communities, mostly hereditary—as in Hunza, where the Mir is an Ismaili and the religious leader—but local organisations were always strengthened as a result of his visits. On this occasion, too, he streamlined the religious and administrative institutions of Ismailis in India, adapted rules and regulations where necessary and gave his interpretation of the Holy Law.

Zakat still served the old Reform Party as a pretext for agitation: ‘When the Aga Khan visited Karachi in 1920,’ they told all who would listen, ‘he carried away fifteen lakhs of rupees after a stay of only twenty-six days.’ They claimed that, on another occasion, he



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collected 1,540,000 rupees after a stay of only two hours. As with his pet project, Aligarh University, he always collected money for a good purpose and every Ismaili would have been mortally offended had the Imam refused his contribution.

Frequently the boot was already on the other foot. Had the Aga Khan granted his opponents a glimpse of his accounts, their case would not have stood up very well. He and Lady Ali Shah not only invested their followers' contributions shrewdly, the growing number of health, education and sports centres testified to the community's social and economic advance under his régime—the value of land and property at the disposal of his followers was constantly going up; yet, with religious fervour, many of them insisted on giving more.

Though far short of the extravagant notions abroad (some suggested later that there was more gold in his coffers than in the vaults of Fort Knox) the Aga Khan's personal fortune had grown immensely as a result of clever management. One of the first to appreciate the potential of Middle Eastern oil, he acquired shares in American oil companies with concessions in the area whose value multiplied. His lucky touch was beginning to attract the attention of financial experts and his portfolio of shares was an object lesson on how to grow richer every day.

Other people's money was of absorbing interest to him and he was intrigued by the affairs of ex-Khedive Abbas Hilmi with whom he was on friendly terms. He had always thought of Hilmi as a brilliant financier who had made a large fortune for himself after losing most of his capital in Egypt. To his great astonishment, the Aga Khan found out that dubious associates had relieved Hilmi of all he owned and that he died a poor man.

There was no risk of such a disaster befalling the Aga Khan, the least gullible of men. Even his hobbies were richly rewarding. Returning to Europe in the spring of 1924, he found his racing interests prospering and his fame as an owner spreading. As a politician, he received many honours—the Council of State in India recommended him for the Nobel Prize for Peace—but as a popular figure he was also a target for good-humoured music-hall jokes. Comedians were singing ditties about him. Whether referring to beautiful women or his sporting activities, they ended with a punning refrain about what the Aga can or Khant do.



CHAPTER VI

‘It is a matter of concern to India, and more particularly to Bombay, that His Highness the Aga Khan should find happiness in his private life.’

The Times of India, December 8, 1929.

THE Aga Khan was in Aix les Bains—he was actually in his bath at the time—when the news came through that his horse Diophon had won the Two-Thousand Guineas Stakes at eleven to two, his first Classic winner in England. Salmon Trout made it a pair by winning the St Leger at six to one . . . The green and chocolate colours were flying high.

Success confirmed many of his idiosyncratic views on racing matters about which he argued fiercely with friends. There was the question of mating—which was more important, the dam or the sire? On this he was in harmony with his old friend, Lord Wavertree, partisan of the pro-dam school. Mollycoddling? He seemed to side with William Duke, who (like the coachmen of yore) did not spare the horses. If a horse broke down during the preparation for a big race it would probably have broken down in the big race.

William Duke, or, for that matter, Frank Butters, who took over the training of his horses some time later, attached little importance to a horse’s appearance. Both believed one yearling was as good as another as long as it had good health, nervous energy and the capacity to rest and sleep. Duke hardly ever looked at a horse before he bought it.

Racing in the footsteps of Salmon Trout and Diophon, Teresina and Paola assured the Aga Khan second place among England’s winning owners of 1923. In the following year, Friar’s Daughter and Voluse were the stars of a splendid batch which went to Sheshoon,



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where Sir Edward Greer' looked after the Aga Khan's expanding Irish interests. The next stud farm he bought, Gilttown (Kilcullen, Co. Kildare), became the best known of all. There was no holding him now. He headed the list of winning owners for the first time in 1924 and repeated the performance more frequently than any other owner.

His technique as a punter did not lag behind. When he entered the previous year's Irish Derby winner *Zionist* for the Lincolnshire Handicap, he warned young Charlie Smirke, the jockey, not to talk about the horse's chances. Smirke gathered that his owner had placed a bet of £500 at a hundred to one on *Zionist* and agreed to allow the bookmakers time to 'hedge' the bet—George of the Ritz thought the bet was £1,000 at fifty to one but, then, there were always at least two versions about everything the Aga Khan did.

A nine to two favourite, *Zionist* faltered in the last few strides and was beaten by a rank outsider: 'He was a desperately difficult horse to ride,' Smirke told the Scout, *Daily Express* racing expert, years later, 'I don't think it was my fault we were beaten but the weight *Zionist* carried and had to give away was too much for us.'

Of course the Aga Khan had his eye on the Derby but it was his ambition to win the great classic with a horse bred in his own stud. To him, breeding horses seemed infinitely more satisfying than buying them. It stimulated his imagination and became his main interest. He pondered a hundred theories about the making of a good horse, studied the conformation of thousands of sires and dams and followed the history of their offspring through generations. This involved science had no more advanced scholar.

So well versed a racing man was bound to encounter an echo in a like-minded expert. The Aga Khan met him in the person of Colonel J. J. Vuillier, the famous French breeder who operated an idiosyncratic points system. The Colonel accepted the Aga Khan's invitation to join him but this did not mean that his calculations were always accepted without question. This particular owner was quite capable of adjusting the Colonel's findings in the light of his own views. Colonel Vuillier was installed at Marly la Ville, the Aga Khan's first French stud farm—he bought another, La Coquenne, in 1927, and a third, St Crespin, two years after that.

In the winter of 1925, Kenya's Ismailis were excitedly looking



forward to one of the Imam's rare visits, few with greater anticipation than Eboo Pirbhai, a young Indian-born Ismaili who cherished a childhood memory of seeing the Aga Khan in Bombay ('This is your Holy Imam,' his parents told the boy at the Mosque where they went to pay homage to their leader). The family settled in East Africa before the First World War, went to live in Lamu by the coast, then moved to Nairobi. After graduating from the Aga Khan Religious School (later renamed Duke of York School), Eboo and his brothers, like most Ismailis, started up as small shopkeepers. Soon Eboo went his own way, bought a filling station ('I was convinced everybody would want a car'), learned to drive and established a transport firm.

Every free minute was devoted to the community, helping in the Mosque, serving with the uniformed Aga Khan Volunteer Corps, working for the new Health Board. When jobs were allocated to followers for the Aga Khan's visit, Eboo was chosen 'to drive His Highness'. He was there, proudly at the wheel of his own car, when the Imam arrived to be received by Gaivanji Lalg, leader of East Africa's Ismailis.

As was his habit, the Aga Khan soon engaged his driver in conversation: 'He seemed to like me,' was Eboo Pirbhai's impression. The Imam asked him many questions, then said: 'I give you my blessing for your business—you will be a great man in years to come.' For a young Ismaili nothing could be more inspiring. Eboo's pride knew no bounds when the Aga Khan added that he hoped to see him again on future visits and that he ought to be a member of the Ismaili Council. It was like an accolade. Eboo's appointment to the Council was not long delayed.

In this way the Imam encouraged the young men of his community, often linking exhortation with practical advice, bringing a whiff of his European experiences to Africa, giving his followers new ideas but also good old-fashioned faith which took so many of them to the top. The encouragement generated ambition, the prophecy became self-fulfilling. The Aga Khan's eye for ability and talent rarely failed him. He was certainly right in this instance because Eboo—Sir Eboo Pirbhai—has become leader of East Africa's Ismailis and owner of Kenya's biggest fleet of safari vehicles and taxis.



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Recalling the fateful days of 1925 which launched him on his spectacular career—Kenya Legislative Council, knighthood from King George VI, great wealth and standing in the new Kenya—Sir Eboo showed me over his fine bungalow, Dar-ul Amam (House of Peace), in Nairobi's exclusive Muthaiga district with the foreign embassies and big private residences standing in their own grounds. His three sons, Cambridge graduates, hold prominent positions in the Ismaili community, his three daughters were educated at Cheltenham Ladies College and three grandsons at Harrow, Winston Churchill's old school. The whole family feels strongly that they owe their good fortune to the Imam, and Sir Eboo at once made his statement of faith: 'The Aga Khan is our leader,' he said. Speaking about the old Aga Khan and his successor in the same breath, he went on: 'He is more than a Pope. What he says is for our benefit and his guidance and advice is often years ahead of the times. They are accepted although he applies neither force nor pressure.'

In the mid-twenties, while the Aga Khan travelled, Aly continued his education and his sport. By the time he was fifteen he was familiar with most of his father's famous horses, frequently went to the Berkshire stables or, with Thomas and Nesbit Waddington, on excursions across the Irish Sea to visit Giltown and Sheshoon. He was already beginning to live up to his father's notion of the ideal horseman. So far, though separation from his parents sometimes bothered him, he enjoyed a largely untroubled and uncomplicated boyhood.

His mother had been ailing for over a year but he was utterly unprepared for the news which reached him at the end of 1926. It seems that her health had been failing but the doctors had been unable to diagnose the source of her troubles. In December, in a Neuilly clinic they operated to remove her appendix but discovered that there was nothing wrong with it. She seemed on the way to recovery, was, after all, only thirty-seven years old: 'But one afternoon—to let the Aga Khan take up the sad story—I was driving in the Bois, and when I went back to the hospital I was told that she had died during my absence.' The cause of death was an embolism.

The Waddingtons told Aly as gently as possible but it came as a great shock. He travelled to Paris to join his father and attend the funeral rites in the new Paris Mosque. Ginetta's body was taken to



Monte Carlo where she was buried by the side of her baby son, Mahdi Mohammed. Most of her considerable fortune went to Aly who became the owner of the villa at Cimiez, the house in Deauville, the Paris residence in the rue de Prony and the country place at Maisons Lafitte. All this meant little to the boy and could not compensate him for the loss of a dearly-loved mother. He never mentioned her again, evidence—as every psychologist knows—that his pain was so great, he could not bear to recall it to his mind.

Back in England and with the Waddingtons, Aly plunged into ever more phrenetic activities. He spent more and more time with his father's horses. From Michael Beary, the stable's leading jockey, he learned enough tricks of the trade to qualify as a first-class amateur rider. By the time he was old enough to ride to hounds, the Waddingtons eased him into the exclusive strongholds of English fox-hunting. In Sussex and Warwickshire where the best hunts pursued the finest foxes, houses were rented for the personable youngster with the swarthy skin and the slim, athletic figure. Aly entertained generously, was greatly admired for his horsemanship and not out of his teens when the County girls began to cast covetous eyes in his direction.

When he was eighteen he was installed in a house in London where the season's débutantes welcomed the exotic newcomer to the social scene. Prince Aly attended royal garden parties and missed few of the non-stop coming-out balls. There were whispers about this girl or that (each with an impeccable name) who was said to have put up no resistance at all to his charms, and some of them have since almost proudly confirmed the old suspicions. So that life should not be all play—the idea of sending him to Cambridge University having been abandoned—the plan was for him to study law with Charles Romer, a young London barrister with chambers in Lincoln's Inn.

Content to watch Aly's progress from afar, his father left the Waddingtons in full charge. Much of the Aga Khan's own time was spent in the company of the attractive Mademoiselle Carron whom he called 'Jane' although her friends knew her as 'Andrée'. A whole year elapsed before he proposed to her. He was over fifty, she twenty years younger, and before she had time to give her answer the Press began to speculate about his new romance. Reports said he



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had fallen in love with a girl who was selling candy in a sweetshop in Chambéry: 'The girl in the candy shop had never met me,' the Aga Khan growled, 'she did not know me from Adam; my Mlle Carron was someone quite different . . .'

A thousand problems battled for his attention and he had been keeping aloof from India's sharpening struggle for independence. Mahatma Gandhi whose non-violent marches provoked much violence was in and out of prison, Mohammed Ali Jinnah was taking an increasing share in the Muslim leadership. In the long run it was impossible for a Muslim of the Aga Khan's stature not to be drawn into the conflict. In the deteriorating situation a new initiative came from Viceroy Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax) who assured Indians in a tortured phrase that the British government was seriously contemplating the attainment of Dominion status for India. A Royal Commission was sent to India to prepare for a major conference. Its leader was Sir John Simon, lawyer and statesman, and a future Labour Prime Minister, Mr Clement Attlee, was among the members.

For India's Muslims it was essential to get together and decide on a common policy. An all-Muslim conference was convened in Delhi and the Aga Khan asked to preside over it. He was back in the mainstream of Indian affairs and worked his charms on delegates behind the scenes as well as carrying out his functions as chairman. After a great deal of manoeuvring, the conference, under the Aga Khan's guidance, arrived at a common policy and decided that a federal system was the best form of government for India. Whatever the form of India's future administration, they would insist on the right to elect their own representatives and press for a share in provincial and central government. The Aga Khan could proudly claim to be the parent of these important decisions.

Even the tremendous issues of India's future, however, could not compete with the momentous developments in his private life. After two years of courtship, Jane-Andrée agreed to become his wife. In Europe, for the international statesman and popular racing man, the portly but elegant *homme du monde*, to take a wife, was an interesting social event. For the Imam of the Ismailis to take a new Begum would be a great Muslim occasion. In India, in Africa, in the Middle East his followers would hail the new Princess, celebrate



with extravagant ceremonies and shower gifts on their beloved leader and his spouse.

‘I shall arrange for you to take the Muslim faith,’ he told the ‘bewitching maid of the Savoy mountains’. Jane shook her head. She was a Catholic, her family was Catholic and she had no intention of changing her faith. The Aga Khan was disappointed. It would have to be a civil wedding and there would be no Muslim ceremonies in Bombay and Karachi. By this time—September 1929—he could be in no doubt that his prospective marriage was exciting tremendous interest all over the world and that it would be difficult to escape the attention of the Press. But a great many problems remained to be settled before a formal announcement could be made. The heads of the community would have to be informed, his lawyers and bankers would have to make arrangements—he eventually settled £200,000 on his bride. He also had the difficult task of breaking the news to Aly. All these matters required thought and the Aga Khan was the last person to allow himself to be stampeded but he was too infatuated to show his anger when, as most women would, Jane-Andrée let the cat out of the bag before he was ready: ‘I am going to marry Prince Aga Khan at Aix-les-Bains on November 20,’ she told French reporters. Her father would not be gainsaid either.

Monsieur Carron told the Paris newspaper *Midi* that, contrary to the tales about himself and his daughter, he had been managing hotels in Chambéry, Nice and Paris: ‘My future son-in-law, the Aga Khan,’ he said, ‘desires complete secrecy.’ He, M. Carron, had two daughters and two sons, one of them living in Belgium, the other in Scotland. His wife had died in childbirth. His elder daughter managed a dress shop in Paris, and Jane-Andrée had been working in a perfumery at the time she met the Aga Khan at the house of one of her sister’s clients. The Prince would marry her at the end of November or the beginning of December and the honeymoon would be spent in India . . .

‘It is a cock-and-bull story,’ the Aga Khan spluttered when confronted with this report: ‘I have no fiancée!’ Leaving the matter shrouded in mystery in the best Ismaili tradition, he refused to say any more. The indefatigable reporters saw him emerging from Villa Victoria in Aix-les-Bains every morning with Jane-Andrée and driving to the local course for his daily round of golf. To escape the



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Press, he left 'for an unknown destination', which was, in fact, Nice.

When he returned to Aix-les-Bains a week later, the mystery was no more. He called the reporters together and told them with a big smile: 'I have refused to discuss my intentions until now because I had not made a definite decision. But the marriage is now decided upon. It will take place on December 4, and my friend Henri Clerc, Mayor of Aix, will tie the bond.'

'No romance of recent times has created such world-wide interest,' the *Daily Mail* wrote. Sheepishly newspapers put the record straight and reported that Mlle Carron had not worked in a chocolate shop in Chambéry but in a dress-making shop in the Boulevard Haussman in Paris. The *Daily Express* summed up popular reaction: 'The announcement of the Aga Khan's approaching marriage is a piece of news of great interest to the British people. The Empire has no firmer friend, and the British turf can boast of no more splendid and sporting patron. On both grounds we offer our congratulations and good wishes.'

Excitement in Aix-les-Bains was mounting as the day of the wedding approached. It was finally fixed for Saturday, December 7, 1929, and on the previous day Mlle Carron talked to reporters. She was wearing a red and beige ensemble with a big diamond spray and looked very attractive. It would be a small wedding, she said. They had abandoned the idea of having the families. Hers was too big, his could not easily come from so far. Then she went to put flowers on her mother's grave at the local cemetery.

The Aga Khan was nowhere to be seen. It turned out that he had gone on a lone motor trip to Lausanne. When he returned that evening stacks of telegrams and good wishes awaited him. He emerged only to plead for a little privacy. He was not going to tell anyone where they were going on their honeymoon except that it would be somewhere in Italy: 'After all,' he turned on the questioners, 'you would like to be left in peace on your honeymoon, wouldn't you?'

On the day, the mountains surrounding Aix-les-Bains were covered with snow and an icy drizzle hung in the air but the crowds armed themselves with umbrellas and made for the town hall, a medieval palace. By ten a.m. the photographers were in position and the streets outside chock-a-block with people. Mayor Henri Clerc, a well-known dramatist, could not have wished for a more romantic



occasion. First to arrive were the bride's two witnesses, **Maitre Durand**, a lawyer, and **Monsieur Borel**, a French Deputy and Prefect of the Department of Haute Savoie. They were quickly followed by two Imams of the Paris Mosque, **Ali Yvahia Diu** and **Mohammed Ben Lahsei**, resplendent in their white burnouses and turbans.

The bridegroom, by contrast, wore a light overcoat over his lounge suit and the bride was dressed in the Aga Khan's English racing colours—emerald green, mink trimmed dress with chocolate coloured hat, gloves, shoes and handbag. The Tricolore and the Union Jack flew side by side in the Mayor's parlour and the table was strewn with roses and carnations. **Monsieur Clerc** made the Aga Khan an honorary citizen of Aix-les-Bains before proceeding to pronounce the couple man and wife according to French law. The formalities completed, the Mayor's place was taken by the two *mukhis* and an interpreter. **Ben Lahsei** read the *khotba* and wedding address in Arabic, specially composed for the occasion, and prayed with hands outstretched, palms upwards, that Allah, the one true God, would pour the essence of his mercy on the Aga Khan, his representative on earth. Then he took the small gathering as witnesses of the marriage.

Leaving the town hall, the couple were mobbed as they made their way to the **Hôtel Pavillon Rivollier** for the wedding breakfast. After the meal the Aga Khan gave a short newsreel interview before quietly slipping away with the new Begum. Their car was followed by another one carrying the luggage and the servants and the cavalcade drove off towards an Italian honeymoon. The wedding guests were told that Aix-les-Bains' new honorary citizen had donated £2,000 for the city's poor.

The couple had not gone far before the Aga Khan told the chauffeur to forget about Italy and take the familiar route to Cannes, no more than 150 miles away. At Cap d'Antibes, a thrilling surprise awaited the Begum. The car swung through high, ornate gates into a grandiose garden whose radiance even winter did not dim. Tall trees, manicured lawns, decorative bushes surrounded the attractive house: 'La Villa Jane-Andrée,' the Aga Khan said.

He and his bride went along the wide, marble-paved loggia into the salon with the Persian silk carpets, seventeenth-century Flemish



Gobelins and the precious *objets d'art*. The wood-panelled library with a Turkish motif, the dining-room with the wrought iron doors, heavy carved table and silver candelabra completed an ensemble as opulent as it was tasteful. The house, sumptuous and simple at the same time, resembled the man who provided it, combined an oriental taste with French elegance, was full of museum pieces but eminently livable-in.

After the honeymoon, the Aga Khan took the new Begum to London. One of their first excursions was to Fawley Manor, Richard Dawson's stables at Whatcombe, where Colonel Vuillier, George Lambton and Michael Beary were awaiting them. The congregation of the mighty racing brains-trust could have one meaning only—the Aga Khan was going all out to win the Derby. The proud owner showed the Begum one of his horses, Blenheim, a son of Blandford, who cost 4,100 guineas. Blenheim would be a runner but the horse he confidently expected to win the greatest classic for him was Rustom Pasha. Michael Beary was certain the colt would take him first past the post.

The Ritz Hotel was like a branch of the India Office and the Aga Khan's apartment the scene of heated political and diplomatic discussions. He was desperately anxious to bring about a consensus of Indian opinion but the signs were not encouraging. Indians wanted to be independent and free but no two parties agreed on the kind of India they wanted, far less on how to realise their objectives. With London or against? Dominion status? A federal state, as the Aga Khan proposed? An orderly transfer of power or a violent separation? How soon, how quickly?

While politicians argued, the situation went from bad to worse. Gandhi's followers were out in the streets, bloody clashes the order of the day, mass arrests filled the prisons. The Viceroy was in London for talks with the government but only a stroke of genius could break the vicious circle of revolt and repression. The Aga Khan tried to rise above the conflict, talked to the government, the Viceroy, the Muslims, the princes and Hindu leaders. The outcome was a British decision to hold a Round Table Conference about the future of India. For the moment, the tension eased. Lord Irwin's intention was to release Gandhi's supporters from jail but negotiations broke down and Gandhi went on his famous march



through the villages of Gujerat. His new campaign of civil disobedience and tax boycott was gaining momentum when he was arrested, prosecuted, convicted and sent to prison. The prospects for the Round Table Conference did not look good.

For a brief diversion, the Aga Khan turned to his horses. The fruits of a decade of endeavour were ripening. So far—up to the beginning of the 1930 season—he had won over £220,000 in prize money but lavish purchases and stables and studs devoured even more, and still the supreme triumph of a Derby win had eluded him. He did not begrudge the big outlay. Rustom Pasha was coming on splendidly and would not disappoint him. With luck Blenheim might also finish among the money, and this ride was given to Harry Wragg, a strong and clever jockey known as ‘Head Waiter’ because of his knack of waiting for the right moment and coming from behind to win.

At Epsom on Derby Day all eyes were on the Aga Khan and his Begum. The Aga’s hopes—if not his money—were on Rustom Pasha but the race was barely underway when they were already doomed. In spite of Michael Beary’s efforts, Rustom Pasha faded early and was soon out of the running. A horse called Diolite seemed to be heading for victory when the Aga Khan was jerked from despondency by seeing Blenheim, Harry Wragg up, coming fast to challenge. In an exciting finish, the two horses ran together stride for stride until, in the nick of time, Blenheim went ahead to pass the post with a length to spare. Behind him Diolite was beaten into third place by Iliad.

‘The Aga Khan! The Aga Khan! The Aga Khan wins!’ From one end of the downs to the other punters joined in the happy chorus of the bookmakers as the beaming owner led in his 18 to 1 Derby winner. The Aga Khan was summoned to the Royal Box and congratulated by King George V and Queen Mary: ‘How much did you have on it?’ the King asked with a knowing wink: ‘Not a shilling, Your Majesty,’ the Aga Khan confessed.

Even without a winning bet his rewards were not negligible. In that year the Aga Khan won over £46,000 in prize money alone. Rustom Pasha went on to win the Eclipse Stakes and his stable companion Ut Majeur took the Cesarewitch at 100 to 1. By this time the Aga Khan’s studs in France and in Ireland were estimated to be worth some £2 million.



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Watching Aly in London at close quarters in these days the Aga Khan learned more about his son than he had known in years. Their common interest in horses brought them closer together but Aly was still in awe of his father and rather reserved in his presence. He was quite uninhibited when he plunged into the hectic life of London which was the liveliest city of the early thirties. Young people—and some not so young—lived it up as in few other capitals: the Embassy Club in Bond Street, the ‘400’ in Leicester Square, the Café de Paris, the Cavendish Hotel, Rosa Lewis presiding. This was Noël Coward’s London, Edgar Wallace’s London, Evelyn Waugh’s London—and Aly Khan’s London.

If there was a world economic crisis on the horizon it did not darken the skies over Mayfair where David, the current Duke of Windsor, another popular Prince of Wales, set the tone and the fashion. With the aristocratic racing set as his base and Michael Beary as guide and companion, Aly melted naturally into the colourful environment.

He could dance through the night, each night with a different girl, and be off at the crack of dawn in his Alfa Romeo at break-neck speed to watch the morning gallops of England’s finest horses at Newmarket where his father’s string was moved to Frank Butters’s stables before long. Come evening and he was back in the little house in Mayfair which he shared with his Ismaili valet. He bought his first horse, Grey Wonder, a gelding, which had been only just beaten by one of his father’s horses.

Having secured the Ismaili colours of Green and Red which had eluded his father, he wore them riding his own ‘Cyclone’ in the South Down Welles Plate, his first race on an English course. Not much later he won the Berwick Welles Handicap on Grey Wonder and went on to ride in a hundred races altogether, a gallant if not consistently successful amateur jockey. Daring as he was on horseback, he could be positively reckless at the wheel of his car. Being unpunctual and always in a hurry only made matters worse. On his way to a race in Brighton, he was stopped by the police and fined for exceeding the speed limit. Returning from Newmarket not much later, he was involved in another motoring accident and lost three teeth but was back in the saddle a few days later. His near accidents were too numerous to count.



Extramural activities left him little time to study law and 'eat his dinners'—those reading for the Bar examination must attend a certain number of dinners at the Inn of Court to which they belong. To perfect his horsemanship, he went on a stiff advanced course at an equestrian school in Cambridge and promptly employed this for the greater glory of his barrister by winning the Bar Point-to-Point, a performance he repeated in the next two years. He had, his friends said, the love of the Arab for his steed and the skill of the Persian on horseback. But he was already aiming higher—his next adventure was in the air, he started training as a pilot and it was not long before he earned his 'wings'.

Just the same, the Aga Khan thought this was as good a moment as any for his son to take on some of the religious duties of the Imam's heir. Aly had, of course, met leaders of Ismaili communities on their visits to his father in Europe but the rank and file of the faithful had not set eyes on him since his childhood visit. Now the Imam decided to send his son on a tour of Ismaili centres in Syria which no Imam had visited in centuries: 'I am sending my beloved son to you,' he wrote in a message to his followers, 'you should consider him as equivalent to my own coming.'

At Beirut, Lady Ali Shah was awaiting her grandson to guide his first steps in this difficult territory and introduce him to some of Syria's Ismailis, rough men of the mountains, who had travelled for days from their remote homes on mule or horseback to greet the son of their divine leader. Heirs of the tradition of Hasan-i-Sabbah's *fida'is*, they matched the religious fervour and fanatical devotion of the men of Alamut.

Had there been doubt about the reception these primitive warriors would give the sophisticated and westernised youngster, it was quickly dispelled. The Aga Khan never entertained such a doubt because he had a higher opinion of his son than Aly himself suspected and sensed the spark in his temperament which would quickly fire his followers. No sooner had the reception committee spotted Aly—His Serene Royal Highness, Prince Aly Khan, as he was styled in these parts—than the Aga Khan was proved right. The men prostrated themselves before the eminent visitor, tried to touch his clothes, sought his glance. Flushed with excitement, Aly responded warmly and joyfully.



The enthusiasm in the villages was even greater. Wherever he went, he was greeted by cheering crowds lining the dusty roads. Exchanging his Savile Row suits for the flowing robes of the indigenous Arabs, he joined his hosts in daring displays of horsemanship and quickly earned their respect. The tour reached triumphal proportions at Salamiya, the Ismaili stronghold where he remained a favourite throughout his life.

His was an astonishing feat of personality: 'Aly's appearances always sent the marriage rate soaring,' wrote Leonard Slater. 'Young men would speed their courting; young women would overcome their shyness.' Sex appeal may have had something to do with it but much of Aly's success was spontaneous popular reaction to a warm-hearted, handsome young man with a genuine affection for people. From Syria he went on to Bombay and Karachi where he visited *jamatkhanas*, led the prayers and performed religious ceremonies with a touch as sure as that of an experienced *mukhi*. The tour was a great success.

In London the future of the people among whom Aly moved with such ease was under discussion and his father was in the thick of the diplomatic wrangle over India. The Maharajah of Baroda said that the issues involved were the prosperity and contentment of three hundred and fifty million souls and the greatness and safety of the British Empire but it would have been more correct to describe it as the beginning of the Empire's break-up. India was on the verge of revolution, some of her ablest men were in jail and the mood was so ugly that, in the words of the *Daily Telegraph*, even British financial resources were insufficient to hold rebellious India and that to hold it by force would be foreign to the whole genius of British rule.

The 1930 Round Table Conference on India opened under a cloud because Gandhi and the Congress Party refused to attend. British and Indian leaders hoped that the Aga Khan would be able to allay some of the bitterness. He was in his place when King George V spoke at the inauguration in the House of Lords before delegates moved to St James's Palace for their working sessions. The British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, presided over the imposing assembly of Indian Princes, Muslim, Hindu and Parsee leaders, each delegation bristling with historic names. Maharajahs in diamond-studded turbans and glittering coats included Baroda, Kashmir,



Bikaner, Patiala and Bhopal, who were accompanied by their ministers. Facing Ramsay MacDonald and the British delegates, Lord Reading and Sir Samuel Hoare among them, were the Aga Khan and next to him Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the other Muslims. But a conference on India without Gandhi was like a performance of Hamlet without the Prince.

Try as he might, the Aga Khan could only postpone the inevitable end. As hopes of agreement between Muslims and Hindus—and the British—vanished, he concentrated on creating agreement among the Muslims which was no easy task either. Everybody trusted him and he was asked to arbitrate on some delicate questions but these were side issues and the free-for-all ended with the collapse of the conference.

A second gathering in the following year looked no more hopeful. The world economic crisis complicated matters, so did a change of government in England. Not even the presence of Mahatma Gandhi on this occasion made much difference. Again the Aga Khan acted as mediator and some of the more important talks took place not in the conference hall but at the Ritz. In the prevailing atmosphere, however, few expected Gandhi to visit the Aga Khan at his hotel. They soon learned better.

The midnight meeting of the two great Indian leaders took place behind the closed doors of the Aga Khan's apartment. At the outset he assured the Mahatma that, were he to show himself a real father to India's Muslims, they would respond by helping him to the utmost of their ability in his struggle for India's independence: 'I cannot in truth say,' was Gandhi's ice cold reply, 'that I have any feelings of paternal love for Muslims . . . I cannot indulge in any form of sentiment.' The chilly effect of this cold douche pervaded the whole meeting. Though they discussed every aspect of *Swaraj* (self-government), the talks led nowhere. But Gandhi paid the Aga Khan a compliment which rose above the acid Hindu-Muslim communal conflict. In these troubled days, Gandhi said, the Aga Khan displayed infinite patience, understanding and wisdom.



CHAPTER VII

ALTHOUGH intimates talked about his flashes of temper, his impatience with fools and his imperious manner which brooked no contradiction, the Aga Khan, at the age of fifty-five, wealthy, respected, popular, bestrode the contemporary scene as a benevolent father figure. Though it was difficult to imagine him in the role of a devoted son, to him it came quite naturally. Early in 1932, he announced that his mother, Lady Ali Shah, would be paying her first visit to London.

When the grand old lady of Malabar Hill arrived, their reunion was an emotional affair. She wanted to see London, scene of her son's triumphs; above all she wanted to see her son—even after all these years, separation from him was still painful. She was eighty-four years of age and not blind to the course of nature: 'Death is inevitable,' was one of the first things she told him, 'but if it comes to me in your absence, it will be unendurable.' The Aga Khan begged her not to worry: 'You will breathe your last with your head in my lap,' he promised, as it turned out, prophetically. She was as yet far from death's door.

Stories of her vitality and strength were not exaggerated. She moved with complete assurance in her new surroundings but rather than stay with her son at the Ritz, she moved into Aly's Mayfair house. Allah only knows what she thought of London life. Unlike her westernised son and grandson, she was, as someone said, 'a strict warden of the past who sees little that is worthy or desirable in the fruits of the present'. Her face adamantly hidden behind the veil her son encouraged Ismaili women to drop, she wore the traditional Persian-style silken trousers and soft draperies



which she preferred to European clothes. She ate sparingly, drank water only and observed the fasts.

King George V and Queen Mary received her, Ismailis paid homage to her. But nothing pleased her as much as to be with her son on whom her eyes rested lovingly: 'Fate has smiled generously upon him,' she observed, 'but in his good fortune he has always been good to others.' Fate smiled on him again—after an interval of twenty-two years he was going to be a father once more. Begum Andrée was expecting a baby.

Being in constant demand at political, social and sporting functions, the Aga Khan seemed to be constantly on the move from one highly publicised event to another and some of his friends wondered whether he ever found time for contemplation beyond the next Indian difficulty. As if to give them their answer he spoke on the radio—his subject, significantly, 'If I Were a Dictator'. After exercising his pet theories on religion and education, he encouraged listeners to think good and beautiful thoughts. If he were a dictator, he said, the over-clothing and over-feeding on which money was foolishly wasted would be replaced by rational diet and dress and the money spent on golf-courses, tennis-courts, cricket, football and hockey grounds. Every European child would be taught an Eastern language, every Asiatic child a European one. His strongest plea was for the removal of barriers between peoples, mutual understanding and, above all, peace.

Peace in practical terms occupied his mind and there was no shortage of trouble spots in need of honest efforts by men of his calibre. But goodwill was not enough. He wanted to represent India in international councils but came up against some stiff resistance. Being highly thought of in London did not endear him to Gandhi and the Congress Party and his dedication to Crown and Empire was a liability. In Delhi, even in Whitehall, he felt side-tracked and, though he knocked on many doors, he received no offers.

A whispering campaign damned him with faint praise. What a splendid racehorse owner he was—but politics? Surely, his interests were mainly artistic and literary! His past political achievements? They were of benefit to Muslims only, and, as Imam of the Ismailis, was he not bound to put the interests of his followers above all



else? The man whom the public regarded as a living success story was thoroughly frustrated. His great ambition would have remained unrealised had it not been for Sir Samuel Hoare. With plans for a Disarmament Conference in Geneva maturing, Sir Samuel immediately thought of the Indian leader who pleaded the cause of peace so eloquently: 'I was appointed a member of the Indian delegation,' the Aga Khan wrote, 'nominally as second in command to Sir Samuel Hoare, but to take charge as soon as he left. I was also appointed chief Indian representative at the 1932 Assembly of the League.' Prospects for the success of the conference were not auspicious although Stalin's Soviet-Russia represented by Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov was trying to find contact with the West. The Germans, predictably, sent a soldier to deal with disarmament, General Werner von Blomberg, whom Hitler sacked when arms became the only instrument of German diplomacy.

Uninhibited by restraints which might have dictated caution to a lesser man, the Aga Khan shed the nimbus of a racing idol, the halo of a religious leader, the ivory-tower airs of a philosopher and jumped with both feet first into the political whirlpool. He gave a series of dinner parties to bring delegates together informally, the biggest for Maxim Litvinov which melted much ice. He talked to Blomberg undeterred by the signs that Germany might soon be pursuing her 'just aspirations' by force of arms. Altogether, the Aga Khan did a great deal of good in Geneva. But time was against the partisans of peace.

A peace operation was also required in his own bailiwick where the troublesome Khoja Reformers were taking advantage of the Imam's long absence to keep opposition to his religious establishment alive. To counter a new campaign, the Aga Khan asked Aly to go to Bombay and Karachi and work his charm on the Khoja community. When they heard that Aly was on his way, the Reformers changed their tactics and prepared a document to present to the son of the absentee Imam. In a crude attempt to play off the son against the father, it suggested that the spirit of Alamut was alive in India, that the dagger was still the Imam's principal weapon against his opponents, some of whom had even been murdered. The tone of the document was menacing, a veiled threat seemed to hint at counter-action.

III



If this was designed to put fear into Aly's heart, the plan was misconceived. Aly's whole life followed Nietzsche's philosophy of living dangerously. He accepted the document, sent it through 'proper channels' to his father and forgot about it. Going about his religious duties with evident pleasure he impressed his father's followers with his joie de vivre, enlivened ceremonial occasions with his boyish enthusiasm, and conquered with his easy manner. In the family tradition, he was anxious to support an educational institution and eventually adopted Karachi University, donating and collecting funds.

An even more spectacular demonstration of Aly's enterprise and daring was in store for the community. Long distance air travel was still in an experimental stage when Aly put the finishing touches to a plan for a pioneer flight, a test for a regular air mail service, from Bombay to Singapore, ten thousand miles across an uncharted, inhospitable route. The aircraft was a tiny, fragile 'Moth' and he was accompanied by two friends, each in their own 'Moth', the chief instructor of the Bombay Flying Club and his father's erstwhile political adviser Naoroji Dumasia, assistant editor of the *Times of India*.

The venture fired the imagination of Ismailis and non-Ismailis alike. At Rangoon Aly was given a triumphal civic reception and made a fine speech which pleased the Burmese. His two friends turned back but he went on, as he said, in order to make people air-minded. The flight was a great boon for civil aviation. Other Indian princes became as enthusiastic as he and aerodromes sprang up in Hyderabad, Baroda, Indore and other Indian states.

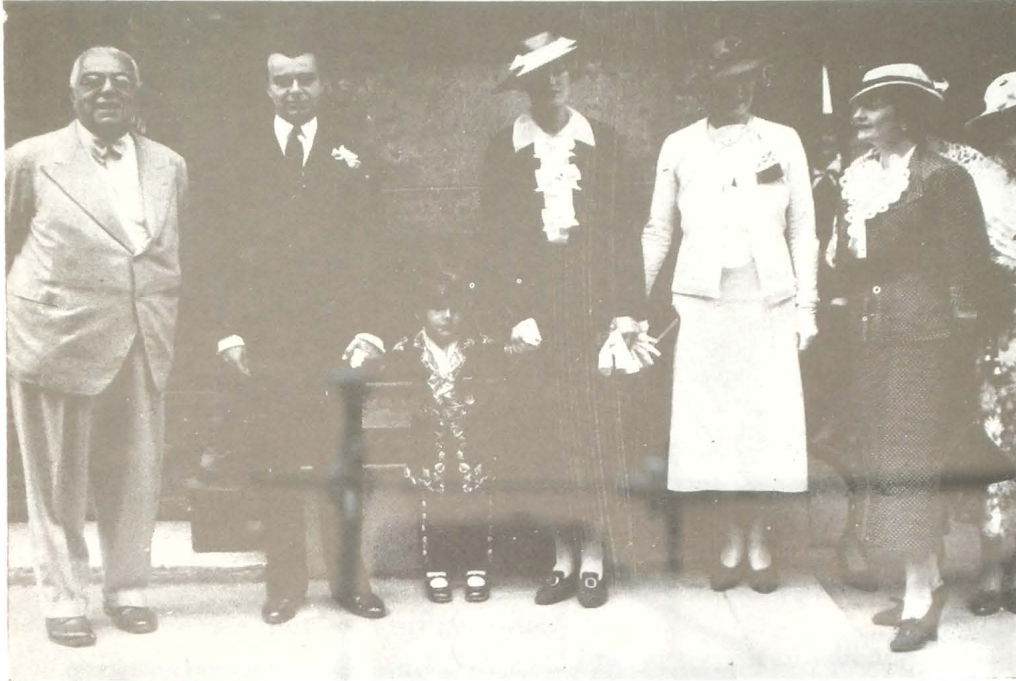
On English race-courses that year it was the Aga Khan who made all the running. With Frank Butters training his English horses he was bound for another record season. After winning the Oaks with Udaipur, he entered no fewer than four horses for the St Leger—Udaipur, Firdaussi, Dastur, known as 'The Three Musketeers' and Taj Kasra. He fancied Dastur which had stamina and speed and only needed a little more luck than in his three classic races when he had finished second. Michael Beary chose the horse as his mount in preference to Udaipur which he left in Harry Wragg's strong hands while J. Taylor was riding Taj Kasra and Freddy Fox Firdaussi.

Doncaster race-course was packed, the Aga Khan's name was on



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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Prince Aly Khan and his bride, Mrs Loel Guinness, formerly the Hon. Joan Yarde-Buller, photographed after the civil ceremony, with the Aga Khan, the bride's mother and Begum Andrée, 1936. (Keystone)



Aly Khan and Rita Hayworth, his second wife. (Fox Photos)

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**Aga Khan III with Gandhi at the Ritz Hotel,
London, in 1931. (Paul Popper)**



**Aly Khan and Bettina.
(Paul Popper)**

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all lips but punters and bookmakers, even racing experts, had difficulty in telling his entries apart. Beary was on Dastur which carried a great deal of money at six to one, wearing a chocolate-coloured cap; Harry Wragg's cap was green, the Aga Khan's second colour, while Firdaussi's and Taj Kasra's jockeys sported white caps. After a smooth start, it was difficult to make out the order of the runners in the distance but as they reached the straight, green, brown, white and white were close together. A few more paces in the thrilling race and the chocolate cap was in front and the bookmakers' hearts sank. Then the whites moved forward only to be overtaken by Harry Wragg's green. There was a jumble of colours from which a white cap finally emerged to pass the post by a neck ahead.

Nothing like it had ever happened. One owner had four horses in the first five. The hapless Dastur was second again, Udaipur came fourth and Taj Kasra fifth. The winner was Firdaussi at twenty to one. The Aga Khan was jubilant: 'Let me lead him in,' he said to Frank Butters taking the reins. 'He may not have been the favourite to win the race, but he is my favourite.'

That year, 1932, the Aga Khan again headed the list of winning owners with over £57,000 in prize money, more than he had ever won before. Colonel Vuillier whose controversial breeding and training methods deserved a big share of the credit did not live long to enjoy the stable's triumphs. Before the year was out, his death ended the brief association between owner and breeder which is still a topic of racing gossip on both sides of the English Channel.

Colonel Vuillier's death coincided with the birth of one of the greatest horses he ever bred, Bahram (by Blandford out of Friar's Daughter), whose name was engraved on the roll of English Derby winners three years later. A young man of German antecedents, Robert Muller, with an intuitive understanding of horses, who had been with the Colonel for some time, emerged to take an increasing share in the running of the French racing establishment.

The relentless routine the Aga Khan followed was taking him on another visit to India which was largely devoted to the affairs of his community. He toured the main centres in a special train and followers flocked to the stations to receive his blessing. Like others before, the tour produced many anecdotes which soon made the



rounds in India and Europe. Some amused him, others he shrugged off as the price of fame. One which annoyed him told of his train stopping in the pouring rain and, because he was indisposed, he stayed inside. A *mukhi* placed one of his shoes on the platform for the veneration of the assembled Khojas whereupon the purses they had come to lay at the Aga Khan's feet were piled around the shoe and gathered up by the *mukhi* before the train went on its way. According to another story the Imam handed out letters of recommendation to the Archangel Gabriel but, though this would be equivalent to a Catholic priest promising his congregation to recommend them to God's mercy, this story, too, was a figment of some lively imagination.

The community paid the traditional *zakat* but more often than not the Aga Khan paid them back with interest by helping followers with their business ventures. In the spirit of the Prophet he took an active interest in the economic as well as the religious life of Ismailis, brought them into contact with the West and helped them to find customers for their fine silks, furnishings and other products. New ideas he imported from Europe and the United States enabled Ismaili growers to produce better cotton and grain crops than their neighbours.

He made big investments in the jute industry which expanded under his régime and has grown into a vital element in East Pakistan's precarious economy (Karim Aga Khan is a big shareholder in jute mills which employ some twenty thousand men). The devotion of his followers who benefited from his enterprise did not blind him to the sorry state of India locked, as it was, in communal strife. He was angry with those he thought responsible for the violence which swept the country and said so in Letters to the London *Times* which was his favourite platform for airing his political views.

He returned from India in time for the birth of the Begum's baby. At the American Hospital in Neuilly, on January 17, 1933, she was delivered of a healthy boy. The Aga Khan was as jubilant as any man of fifty-six who becomes a father. He had already decided on a name for the baby—the name of the great Pir (teacher) who had converted the ancestors of so many of his followers. The boy was called Sadruddin ('Shield of Faith') and prayers were said for him in the Mosque in Paris. News of the event was sent to all Ismaili communities.



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Leaving the baby in the care of his nurses, the Aga Khan took the Begum with him on another trip to India. She was thrilled with the reception she received from Ismaili women who felt that the presence of the Imam's sophisticated wife advanced the cause of their own emancipation. The couple went sight-seeing in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras and were welcomed with garlands, loyal addresses and obeisance. They stayed with the Maharajah of Bikaner and the Governor of Bengal. After three crowded months they returned to Cannes in April 1934 to be greeted, the Aga Khan recorded, 'by a much grown, healthy, strong little boy'.

Was it the new baby which turned his mind towards dynastic thoughts? Was it the course of Indian affairs which inspired his wish to cement his spiritual dominion with territorial authority? The truth was that the Aga Khan, however remote from his predecessors, had inherited a vocation to rule—perhaps from the Fatimids, perhaps from his Persian grandfather—which now came to the surface.

Through a question in the Indian Legislative Assembly, it became known that he had discreetly asked the British government to grant him some territory in India over which he could rule. The answer was that a confidential communication had been received from His Highness the Aga Khan but that its nature could not be disclosed. The matter was taken up in the British House of Commons in July 1934 when Major-General Sir Alfred Knox asked Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, for his comments but Sir Samuel had nothing to add to the answer given in India. When Sir Alfred Knox persisted and asked whether any other prominent supporter of the government's Indian policy had asked for an estate in India, Sir Samuel said that if this was meant to cast an aspersion on the motives of the Aga Khan, he was sure the whole House would say it was entirely misplaced.

One of the Aga Khan's biographers, Harry J. Greenwall, suggested that the land on which the Aga Khan had his eye was in the Province of Sind and that he would have been content with a relatively small estate. In retrospect, Greenwall's theory that the Aga Khan wanted the territory for his son, Prince Aly Khan, sounds unlikely. The MacDonald government refused the request but, if only as a solution to his complicated, multi-national tax problems,



the Aga Khan never completely abandoned the idea and his successor has been toying with it ever since his accession.

When, after yet another conference, the British government produced the Government of India Act of 1935, the Aga Khan was extremely critical. To everyone's surprise, his main objection was that it gave Britain too much influence (later he blamed it for taking India into the war). In his view, it ended all hope of uniting India—he was, of course, quite right. The outburst was the Aga Khan's swan song in Indian politics. Hard as he had tried to keep India united and in the Empire, he had failed. He was a disappointed man.

For Aly, life held few disappointments. It was fast—fast aircraft, fast motor-cars, fast horses; and women. If the stories circulating about him could be believed he was changing his women as frequently as his cars and his horses. He was, in truth, for many years associated with one and the same woman, married and much older than he, and was very loyal to her except for the occasional adventure one would expect from a young man of twenty-three. His trouble was that London's society women had a habit of boasting about their conquests, and what more romantic lover to boast about, truthfully or otherwise, than the rich and handsome oriental prince?

If they did not hint at a liaison with him at the time, they made certain to recall it in their autobiographies, the most intriguing of which was published by American-born Lady Thelma Furness, twin sister of Mrs Gloria Vanderbilt. Six years older than Aly, Thelma was the toast of London in the mid-thirties, a frequent partner of the Prince of Wales at dinners and dances. The heir to the throne was expected to marry her but she met Aly in New York and he (to quote from *Double Exposure* which she wrote jointly with her sister) turned his battery of charm on her, showered her with roses, pursued her across the Atlantic to England and courted her throughout a hectic London season.

Before leaving for the United States, Lady Thelma was said to have asked an American girl friend, Wallis Simpson, to look after the Prince of Wales during her absence but by the time she returned to Europe with Aly in tow, the Prince had fallen for Wallis: 'Edward VIII might still be on the throne of England today if not for Aly,' Elsa Maxwell pronounced a little extravagantly. Supplanted in the Prince of Wales's affection, Lady Thelma Furness found consolation



in Aly's arms, went with him on a European jaunt which ended—with Aly, almost inevitably—at the Deauville horse sales. However important women were in his life, horses often took precedence.

Romantic as the affair sounded in Lady Thelma's recollection, for Aly it was but a brief interlude. Mayfair gossips were still talking about it long after his roving eye had come to rest appreciatively and fondly on another woman. It was almost love at first sight. Even thirty-five years later, Princess Joan Aly Khan, when I talked to her in her Eaton Square apartment (where Prince Karim, before his marriage, used a suite of rooms as his London *pied-à-terre*) was as attractive, elegant and haughty as she appeared to her future husband in the hot summer of 1934 in Deauville where he found himself sitting next to her at a dinner party.

For the past seven years, the former Joan Yarde-Buller, one of Lord Churston's daughters and through him descended from Edward III, had been married to Loel Guinness, the wealthy Tory member of parliament for Bath, and they had one son. Aly was only dimly aware of all this, was not even certain of the lady's first name when, jokingly, he turned to her and asked her with mock seriousness: 'Darling, will you marry me?'

Si non e vero . . . The story conveys something of Aly's technique. Joan Guinness might as well have said 'Yes' there and then. They liked each other at once, met again and, when they returned to England, saw a great deal of each other. Aly, who was famous for making every woman feel that she was the only one in the world, had never felt as strongly before.

While his father remained at Antibes, Aly kept an eye on his racing interests, dividing his time between London's unending social round and Fitzroy House, Frank Butters's stables at Newmarket, which sheltered some seventy of the Aga Khan's horses, a few of Aly's and some registered in the name of the Begum. One stood out among them—Bahram, named after Omar Khayyám's hunter after the Aga's first choice of name clashed with a previous registration. Having miraculously recovered from a bout of pneumonia in early life Bahram was the year's undisputed top two-year-old, winner of all his races and the great white hope of 1935. His big test came with the Two Thousand Guineas, the first of the new season's Classics. There was some talk about a weakness of his tail



but it was a minor physical blemish which hardly detracted from his chances.

Bahram was in fine fettle. To double the stable's prospects, Frank Butters entered Theft, another Aga Khan horse, for the same race. From the South of France the owner kept in constant touch with Aly and Butters and was told that most of the money was going on a horse called Bobsleigh and that Bahram and Theft were second and third favourites. A detailed description over the telephone enabled the Aga Khan to recapture the thrill of the race as soon as it was run. Both horses emerged half-way down the final hill and were going ahead with Theft looking a certain winner when gallant Bahram stormed up to go first past the post in a splendid manner.

In the excited anticipation of the Derby, less than three weeks away, Theft was again booked to accompany Bahram, the firm favourite, but a good deal of the public's money went on rival horses, Sea Bequest, Robin Goodfellow and Hairan. There was no question of the Aga Khan keeping away from this race. He and the Begum caught the Blue train from Nice.

He was up early on Derby Day, June 5, 1935, which was wet and cheerless, but on his way to Epsom he saw the sun breaking through the clouds. A big cheer went up for King George and Queen Mary who were celebrating their Silver Jubilee on the throne of England. The Aga, the Begum and Aly went to the paddock to take a closer look at Bahram who seemed fit and well but was a little nervous and sweating. There was nothing to worry about. By the time he reached the start he was composed and moved magnificently. He was well away but boxed in awkwardly by the time the field approached Tattenham Corner. Freddy Fox, his jockey, must have been wondering how he could possibly squeeze through and the Aga Khan was anxious, too. He had no means of knowing of the little drama that was played out on the course. A shout from Fox and Harry Wragg on Theft cleared the way to enable Bahram to surge ahead and win by two lengths (from Field Trial and Robin Goodfellow). For the Aga Khan it was one of the great emotional moments of his life.

That evening he was the guest of honour at a celebration dinner for Jockey Club members at Buckingham Palace for which the tables were decorated in the winning owner's green and chocolate colours, Queen Mary's own idea.



Mahmoud and Bahram could look forward to other great victories but for the Aga Khan religious duties called. From all over the world Ismaili delegations converged on his house in Antibes to pay him homage—on August 18 he celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as Imam. The community had big plans for the auspicious occasion. On behalf of his Indian followers, Mr Gulamali G. Merchant (whose sons are prominent in the Karachi community) humbly requested His Highness to approve plans for an elaborate Golden Jubilee ceremony during his visit to India later in the year—East Africa was making similar preparations.

The Aga Khan demurred but a member of the delegation, a highly respected *mukhi* whose ancestors had been loyal Ismailis for generations, asked permission to tell the story of the Kathiawar model state of Gondal, 'small in size but great in the happiness and contentment of its people' and of Gondal's ruler, His Highness Maharajah Shri Bhagvatsinhji, who won the love and devotion of his subjects to a degree without parallel.

To mark the Maharajah's Golden Jubilee, the *mukhi* explained, the people of Gondal decided to perform the ancient ceremonial of *tula-vidhi*, or weighing, which is of historic Aryan (Indo-Germanic) origin and supposed to ensure peace, health and prosperity to the person weighed. Quoting instances from the golden age of Hinduism when Gods and heroes stalked the earth and inspired mankind to noble deeds, of monarchs who were weighed in gold at their coronations, the *mukhi* said that in all these cases the gold came from the royal treasury, its bestowal was royal largesse and the precious metal gifted in charity to the needy and the poor.

But the gold against which the ruler of Gondal was to be weighed would come from the humble purses of his subjects, the poorest vying with the wealthiest in order to provide the precious metal for the *tula-vidhi* of their beloved paternal Maharajah. Appealing to the Imam's understanding, the *mukhi* said that fifty years, half a century, was a long time to be at the head of a vast and prosperous community which owed the Imam a great deal. It demanded tangible recognition, a token of gratitude from every single Ismaili alive. Surely, what the people of Gondal could do for their ruler, Ismailis should be allowed to do for their Imam. The Aga Khan could do no other than accept the plea. He gave permission for the preparations



to go ahead but had his own ideas on how to employ the proceeds of his followers' generosity for their own benefit.

Not a man to dwell on the past, he quickly turned to current problems. By early September he was in Geneva attending a meeting of the League of Nations Assembly. Japan had just snubbed the League and Hitler's Germany was arrogantly defiant. As to India, the Government of India Act had just been passed, the last major piece of British Indian legislation before the dramatic statute which ended the rule of the British Raj in India twelve years later. The time for smooth, glib words had passed and, addressing the Assembly, the Aga Khan spoke of India's concern about the League's preoccupation with Europe, about the failure of the Disarmament Conference and rearmament which was in full swing. A fortnight later, Mussolini attacked Abyssinia and the Aga Khan's warnings were dramatically justified.

He was deeply involved in the proceedings when he was called to the telephone and told that Bahram had won the St Leger: 'It is the horse of the century!' he exclaimed jubilantly. He claimed a new record: 'I am sure I must have been the only member of the Assembly of the League ever to be called away to hear that his horse had won the St Leger.' No other horse had won the triple crown since Rock Sand thirty-two years earlier.

In the absence of his father, Aly Khan led in the winner but even on this auspicious occasion he did not look as happy and carefree as of old. His own joy at Bahram's fantastic achievement was overshadowed by a feeling of gloom which did not long remain hidden from his friends. By this time everyone seemed aware of Aly's problem. Puritans were whispering of 'scandal' and the shock waves emanating from the heart of London soon reached the Aga Khan in Antibes.

Suspensions, voiced more or less openly, received confirmation in the last week of November, 1935, when a brief notice in the British Press announced that 'A Decree Nisi was granted in the Divorce Court yesterday to Mr Thomas Loel Evelyn Bulkeley Guinness, the retiring Conservative M.P. for the city of Bath, owing to the misconduct of Mrs Joan Barbara Guinness, formerly the Hon. Joan Barbara Yarde-Buller. The suit was not defended. The co-respondent was named as Prince Aly Khan against whom costs were awarded.'



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The London-Antibes telephone lines bristled with acid conversations between father and son but the Aga Khan seemed mollified when Aly assured him that this was not just another intermezzo in his turbulent love life: 'Joan and I are going to be married as soon as possible,' he said. As soon as possible was in six months' time when the decree nisi would become absolute. To escape the European winter and the talk of London and Paris, the young couple decided to await the great day in the sunshine of the Bahamas.

As they were westward bound, the Aga Khan was on his way to the East, travelling towards an ovation unequalled even in his triumphal passage through life thus far. It came about on January 19, 1936, when vast crowds in festive and solemn mood were making for Mazagaon and Hasanabad. Over the years the Ismaili 'Vatican' in Bombay had been the scene of many colourful celebrations but the Aga Khan's Golden Jubilee Durbar they came to witness on this day was certain to surpass all previous occasions in splendour. So many people converged on the scene, it was obvious that large numbers of non-Ismaili Muslims were joining the Khojas on their great day. Although the available space did not allow more than some thirty thousand to reach the immediate vicinity, one eye-witness recorded that the entire population of Bombay seemed on their feet to see the unique spectacle: 'Stupendous and unprecedented' was how some contemporary commentaries described it.

Frail but upright, the aged Lady Ali Shah was awaiting her son on the raised dais with little Sadrudin by her side. Before any of them could even get a glimpse of the Imam, the excited crowd pushed forward bowling over women and children many of whom were trampled underfoot. Coming to the rescue, Bombay's chief of police was injured in the crush. Luckily there were no fatalities and the Imam's dignified presence helped to restore order.

Amid noisy shouts of acclamation, he inspected the Khoja Volunteer guard of honour with the Begum whose precious stones sparkled on her light-green sari. Reaching the dais, the Aga Khan took his place on the *gadi*, the throne, embroidered in real gold and decorated with his coat of arms. Those standing near by thought they could discern a faint smile as he glanced at a big structure, the giant weighing machine. Presently the Imam rose and asked to be heard on an important matter. In the noise it was difficult to understand the



fragments of sound reaching the crowd through inadequate loud-speakers—he was saying that His Majesty the King-Emperor was gravely, critically ill and that he had, therefore, decided to cancel all but the religious ceremonies. Unless there was an improvement in the King's condition, none of the secular functions would take place.

Whether they could hear him or not, the crowd was obviously not in the mood for bad news. Again and again it demanded to see the Imam who rose from his seat to show himself and acknowledge the enthusiastic acclamation. Talking and shouting only subsided when Gulamali Merchant read out the text of a telegram from Buckingham Palace with the King's good wishes for the Imam's future, probably the last message of the reign that was coming to an end. Then the ceremony proper could take its course. Bowing deeply Gulamali Merchant requested His Highness to step on to the weighing machine: 'On behalf of Your Highness's followers,' the Ismaili functionary said, 'I most reverently and respectfully request that Your Highness will allow yourself to be weighed in gold on this happy and auspicious occasion, and accept the gold so weighed as a humble token of our love, devotion and gratitude for all the unbounded bounty and benefits that Your Highness's followers have derived during your Imamatus in the last fifty years.'

Nodding gracefully the Aga Khan eased himself into the chair of the weighing machine while prominent Ismailis slowly loaded the counter-pan with gold bullion until it balanced the Imam's weight of just over two hundred and twenty pounds. Loud cheers greeted the announcement that the value of the gold was 335,000 rupees or £25,760. At last there was silence as *mukhis* began to recite prayers and passages from the Koran. Slowly the Aga Khan rose: 'I accept with great pleasure,' he said, 'the gold that my dear spiritual children have offered me, and give them my loving and paternal spiritual blessings . . .' He had, he added, decided to use the gold for their benefit and had appointed Gulamali Merchant and other leading Ismailis to devise the best possible scheme to apply the proceeds to important projects such as scholarships, transfers of followers from congested districts to better accommodation, infant care and the community's general welfare.

The communal gift having been handed over, delegate after delegate stepped forward to present the Imam of the Ismailis with



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other *nazerana* (valuable presents). The Maharajah of Kutch offered a gold-bordered robe and one thousand rupees in silver and the Nawab of Lunawada a beautiful silver tea-set. Diplomats from many countries brought their governments' good wishes. From Hasanabad the Aga Khan was carried in procession through the streets of Bombay and acclaimed by more people than had ever paid homage to an Imam. The following day ten thousand men and women from Ismaili communities all over the world assembled in the grounds of Mahaluxmi race-course which had been turned into a brilliantly illuminated oriental fairyland.

A silver casket mounted on four carved tigers standing on rare sandalwood—a replica of the Assembly Hall with the clock tower from which the Imam blesses his people—was handed to the Aga Khan. The casket contained a commemoration address which emphasised the great Ismaili tradition of learning, linking Al Ahzar University of A.D. 971 and Aligarh of 1936 and proudly enumerated the progress of Ismailis in Law, Medicine, Commerce and Industry—Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, President of the Legislative Assembly, was one of the many Ismaili Khojas in outstanding positions; Sir Currimbhoy Ibrahim, another Ismaili Khoja, the first Muslim to be created a Baronet. Visibly moved, the Aga Khan once more exhorted his followers to 'educate, educate and educate their children'.

The celebrations came to an abrupt end. When news of the King George V's death reached him, the Aga Khan ordered the Jubilee programme to be forthwith abandoned, gave instructions for all Khoja shops in Bombay to be closed and business to be suspended for three days. He exchanged his colourful robes for black clothes and told his followers to wear their national mourning dress. The Aga Khan's sorrow was genuine and deep. It was also symbolic. He could not help feeling that there would not be many more British monarchs whom he could call King-Emperor. With the death of George V he mourned the India of his dreams.



CHAPTER VIII

IN spite of all the tremendous things that had happened in 1935 the, Aga Khan confessed that, for him, it was 'Bahram's year'. By the same token, the ageing Persian Prince may well have wondered whether 1936 would not turn out to be 'Mahmoud's year'.

He would have been quite right but on his return to Europe other weighty topics soon attracted his attention diverting it from his beloved horses. Indeed, even while Aly's romantic problems were as yet unresolved, the Aga Khan was preoccupied with rumblings of another, more portentous romance. Soon after his accession to the throne, King Edward VIII received the old family friend who happily transferred his loyalty to the fourth British monarch in his lifetime. The King appeared to be well briefed about his work in Geneva and asked a hundred serious and searching questions. King and Imam, individualists both, both endowed with an easy social manner and attuned to the same environment, got on well with each other. They talked for an hour and a half while, the Aga Khan recalled smugly, Lords-in-Waiting and India Office officials cooled their heels in the ante-room.

Soon they met again, first at lunch in the house of Philip Kerr, Marquess of Lothian, then at other private parties when the King was accompanied by Mrs Wallis Simpson. Although these matters were, of course, taboo, the Aga Khan was aware of the imperial drama that was slowly and inexorably building up. A friend of Queen Mary's told him that she wept bitterly whenever she thought of 'the hidden, unspoken catastrophe which loomed ahead' for her son.

The Aga Khan's son and Joan Guinness were back in Europe by May 11. Her decree nisi became absolute and preparations for their



marriage could go ahead. Many of his friends still refused to believe that Aly was about to give up his freedom when the arrangements for a simple wedding in Paris were already completed. For the ceremony the couple chose the unprepossessing town hall of the sixteenth arrondissement not far from Aly's flat. They fixed the date for May 18. The Aga Khan who came to like his future daughter-in-law promised to be present.

The skies smiled and the sun was strong on the pleasant May morning in Paris when Prince Aly Khan, still one month away from his twenty-fifth birthday and, if anything, looking even younger, set out for his wedding in a sober lounge suit with a white gardenia in his buttonhole. He was kept waiting only a few minutes before Joan, accompanied by her mother and sisters, arrived. She was wearing a trim black silk coat and a broad-trimmed black hat with a white bow and looked as cool and composed as ever as she greeted the Aga Khan, the Begum and her groom's half-brother, little Prince Sadruddin, whose blue velvet Lord Fauntleroy suit provided a lively touch of colour.

After the brief ceremony, the Mayor thanked Aly who, like his father at his own wedding, had made a generous donation for the poor of the district. From the town hall, a cavalcade of cars took the wedding party to the Ismaili Mosque at the other end of Paris where *mukhi* Ben Khalifa awaited them in the Hall of Prayers. They took off their shoes before entering and settling on the mats on the ground, Joan's first encounter with the rituals of her bridegroom's faith. The Muslim wedding ceremony with prayers and recitations from the Koran took no more than twenty-five minutes.

During the wedding breakfast, father and son discussed Mahmoud's Derby chances—by a coincidence, as they were talking, Woodstock, a horse belonging to Joan's ex-husband, was running to victory at London's Alexandra Park race-course. Mahmoud, Mumtaz Mahal's grey grandson, in spite of three fine wins among six outings in 1935, had not done well in his first race of the new season. In the Greenham Plate at the beginning of April the colt had failed to make an impression, and in the Two Thousand Guineas, a fortnight earlier, he came only second to Lord Astor's Pay Up. The Aga Khan told Aly that his confidence in the horse that was bred under his own auspices remained unshaken. On this note he parted from the



newly-weds who were off, the press were told, 'on a secret honeymoon'. Their destination was the Villa Jane-Andrée but the honeymoon was going to be short. Aly was firmly resolved to be at Epsom nine days later for Mahmoud's greatest test.

He was by his father's side as the field lined up for the 153rd Renewal of the Derby Stakes, as it is officially called, worth £9,934 to the winner. Pay Up was the five-to-one favourite and Mahmoud, who was not thought capable of staying the mile and a half, rated odds of only one hundred to eight. His trainer Frank Butters preferred Taj Akbar, the Aga Khan's other entry, but Mahmoud's jockey Charlie Smirke shared the owner's high opinion of his mount.

Watching the proceedings from the stands and trying to hide their tension, Aga and Aly picked up Mahmoud when he was lying about eighth or ninth but going well and moving up. The grey colt looked conspicuous and was easy to follow as Smirke manoeuvred him into a favourable position at Tattenham Corner. A thirty-three to one outsider, Thankerton, was leading the field by four or five lengths, followed by Bala Hissar which rated no better odds than Mahmoud, and Taj Akbar which was going strongly.

With a quarter of a mile to go, Smirke who had been anxious to conserve his mount's doubtful reserves for as long as possible, called on him for a spurt. A tap of his whip sent Mahmoud flying forward—shades of the flying Mumtaz Mahal. Now he was catching up on the leaders so fast it looked as if they were standing still and, though some experts still expected him to fade before the finish, he passed the winning post first. Three lengths behind the Aga Khan's other runner, Taj Akbar, was second and Thankerton held on to come third ahead of Pay Up, the hapless favourite.

It was a tremendous victory. Doffing his silk hat to acknowledge the cheers, the Aga Khan's lips were seen to be moving and he could be heard murmuring: 'First and second, first and second.' With the shouts of his Asian followers still ringing in his ears, he was once more basking in the favour of a big crowd. He celebrated his victory with a party at the Embassy Club in Bond Street, one of Aly's haunts, which was decorated with chocolate-tinted carnations and roses in bowls of green ink. Each of the hundred guests had a name famous in racing circles and society.

But the crowd's favour, as the Aga Khan found out, was fickle.



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Popular acclaim turned to public criticism when it became known that soon after his third Derby win he had sold Mahmoud's glorious predecessor Blenheim to the United States. The price Blenheim fetched was £45,000, a great deal of money for a stallion in those days but for a man of the Aga Khan's wealth not an amount so big as to outweigh the loss to his blood line. The transaction provoked much speculation but no plausible explanation, not until thirty years later when Marcus Marsh, the trainer, wrote in his autobiography (*Racing with the Gods*) what a few initiates whispered at the time. In selling Blenheim, the Aga Khan, according to Marsh, was motivated partly by fear: 'He was a man who lived very close to the political pulse and, from the mid-thirties onwards, he was convinced that the German armies would one day engulf Europe. He was quite sure that Britain was doomed. And so he came to look upon the United States as a future refuge.'

The controversy was still raging long after the Aga Khan had left for Geneva where, later in the year, King Edward called him on the telephone from London. The conversation, though 'necessarily guarded', conveyed something of 'the profound sadness and complexity of the drama' in the King's life. The Aga Khan never revealed what they discussed but at this time the King, already preparing for the worst, was casting around for an inconspicuous place to stay after his inevitable departure from England. Switzerland was a distinct possibility and the Aga Khan a most eligible potential host but in the event Edward went to the estate of the Austrian Rothschilds at Enzersdorf near Vienna.

Deeply disturbed by the stormy course of the King's struggle for love and throne, the Aga Khan had the consolation of seeing Aly's life moving into waters as calm as the Lac Léman. He saw a great deal of his son, who was in and out of Geneva where Princess Joan was installed in a rented villa, Le Soleil, to which she had moved from Paris to await the birth of Aly's child. Doris Lyon, a well-trained, state-registered nurse was with her and Jean and Lucy Delporte, a married couple, did the domestic chores. A room was reserved in a private clinic in Geneva for mid-December when the baby was expected to be born.

The Aga Khan was at his villa in the South of France on December 10, 1936, when the news of the King's abdication reached him. The



final, irrevocable decision, to use his words, struck him as utterly tragic. With tears in his eyes he listened to the King's farewell speech on the radio. The moving confession that he could not go on 'without the woman I love' appeared to the sentimental eastern magnate as the grand climax in one of the great love stories of all time: 'Set it alongside the imperishable, tragic and beautiful stories of Persian or Arabian legends, alongside the stories of Antony and Cleopatra and of Romeo and Juliet! Does it not stand forth as perhaps the most moving of them all?' he asked.

Three days later the happy event in his own family circle dispelled the gloom into which the abdication had placed him. On December 13, 1936, Princess Joan Aly Khan was delivered of a baby boy who was pronounced strong and healthy in spite of his premature birth. In these times of political tension and imperial dramas, the birth in Geneva did not command much attention outside the family and outside Ismaili centres who were duly informed. But the Aga Khan hurried to Geneva to congratulate his son and daughter-in-law and to bless the baby. Looking down on the infant he was glad it was a boy who would one day follow in his footsteps as the Imam of the Ismailis.

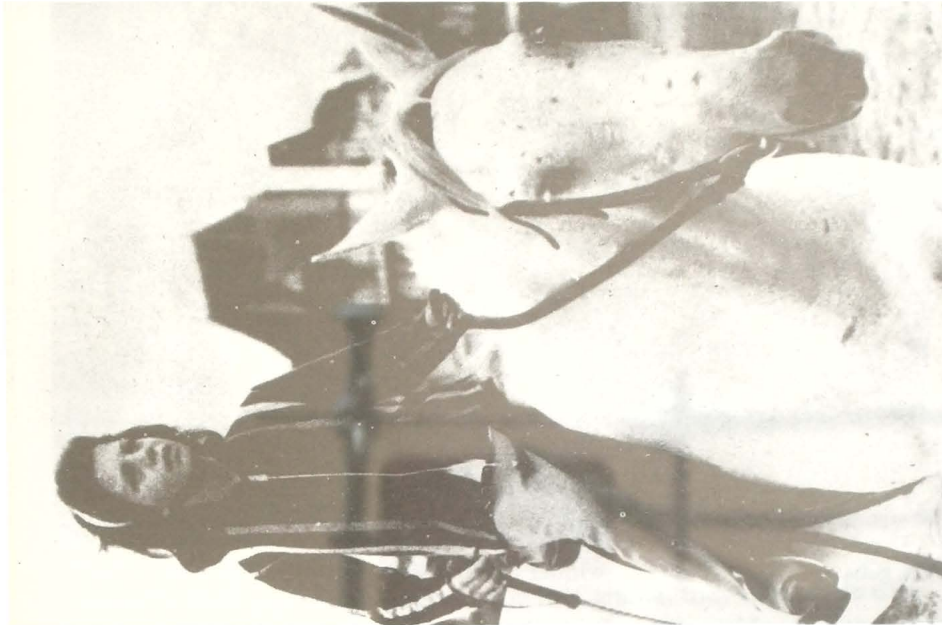
'What shall we call him?' the Aga Khan asked the boy's mother. Though her answer was prompt, the matter was not resolved without long discussions. Joan who had been thinking about it for some time, had made up her mind to call the boy Karim: 'I thought it sounded beautiful in any language, in Persian, in Arabic, in English,' she told me. Considering the boy's European associations—Patrick, her son by her first marriage, and her sister's numerous offspring—she did not want a name which was too difficult to pronounce. The Aga Khan did not think it a suitable name. Princess Joan remembers him saying that it had 'something to do with alms'—actually Karim means 'generous' and is one of the ninety-nine Muslim names for God. Joan was adamant and prevailed on Aly to support her. The Aga Khan, content that the continuation of the line was assured, gracefully accepted defeat.

Early in the new year, mother and baby—and Miss Lyon, who became a fixture in the household, stayed until Karim went to boarding school and remains a friend—moved to the family house in Maisons Laffitte, commuting to the flat in Paris. As soon as



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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**Yasmin, daughter of Aly Khan and Rita Hayworth,
as a young girl. (Keystone)**



**Prince Aly Khan and his son, Prince Karim, at
Harvard. (Camera Press)**

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Aga Khan III with Bahram, winner of the 1935 Derby, F. Fox up.
(Fox Photos)



Aly Khan leads in Petite Etoile at Epsom in 1959.
(Fox Photos)



Karim could talk, he was spoken to in English and French and became bilingual. His first summer holiday, like many in later years, was spent in the house in Deauville. Aly also rented a chalet in Gstaad, the ski-ing village in the Swiss mountains not far from Geneva where Karim later went to school and acquired a big chalet of his own.

Children of perambulating internationalists like the Aga Khan's family rarely enjoy the company of their parents for long and baby Karim was no exception. He was barely one month old when the whole family—Aga, Begum and little Sadruddin, Aly and Joan—went off to the Golden Jubilee celebrations in East Africa where Ismailis did not want to lag behind their Indian brothers in tangible protestation of their loyalty to the Imam. For almost eighteen months they had been preparing for the Aga Khan, in the words of a contemporary, to become the only man in history to be weighed in gold twice—the writer did not live to see him weighed in diamonds and platinum as well.

As so often with expatriates, the Aga Khan's East African followers felt even more strongly about their leader than the Khojas of India. Like Englishmen in Australia or Canada, they had made their home in an alien continent and 'with the Imam's guidance' (as they never tired of saying) had prospered and taken root without shedding their religious beliefs.

From the four corners of Africa they converged on Nairobi for a ceremony which would differ little from the Aga Khan's Golden Jubilee Durbar in Bombay; even the amount they contributed towards the gold was almost the same—£23,000. Among those waiting to receive the Imam on arrival was the President of the Ismailia Council, Count Manji Janmohamed, and Eboo Pirbhai, member of the Council, now a prosperous merchant. Greeting Eboo the Aga Khan smiled and whispered: 'Did I not tell you that you would get on in the world?'

As in Bombay, the weighing ceremony in Nairobi was a joyful event. Prayers were offered for the health and happiness of the Imam who blessed his spiritual children. Their cheers were full-throated and heartfelt. To honour the man who had abolished purdah, Ismaili ladies gave him a tea party, proudly showing their unmasked faces for a photograph with their Imam. They were



joined by Aly's aristocratic English wife, who took the Ismaili name, Tajudowleh, and decided to learn Arabic and Urdu and Study Ismaili history (but did not adopt the Ismaili faith).

As in India, the Aga Khan ordered the funds to be used to his followers' best advantage but his approach was becoming more sophisticated. He instructed the Council to form a Gold Grant Committee to distribute the money to young Ismailis for scholarships to advance their education abroad.

Among the Ismaili schoolboys from all over Africa who benefited was Abdulali G. Tejpar, a third-generation East African Indian who recalled how he first heard about the scheme when he was a seventeen-year-old pupil at the Aga Khan School in Mombasa, one of the many founded by the Aga Khan to give religious instruction to Ismaili children, which soon added mathematics, book-keeping, accountancy and languages to its curriculum. Encouraged by his teachers, Abdulali applied for a grant and was awarded 10,000 rupees to attend the Technical Department for Radio and Engineering at St Saviour College in Bombay for two years.

On his return to Nairobi where skilled labour was scarce, young Tejpar quickly found a job, kept it for eight years, then started his own business. Following the advice and guidance of the new Imam (Karim Aga Khan) to his followers to associate themselves as closely as possible with independent Kenya, Tejpar took African partners and is working well with them. Married with three daughters and one son, all of whom were educated at the Aga Khan School in Nairobi, he wrote to the young Imam in 1968 that he would like to repay the grant which put him on the road to success and good fortune but the Aga Khan thought the Ismaili cause would be better served if he donated it to the Aga Khan Hospital.

Tejpar's story is typical of the effects of the old Aga Khan's 1937 tour and could be multiplied many thousand times. At the same time he initiated the Jubilee Insurance Company for Ismailis (with a substantial personal investment)—health, business, accident, life insurance. For East Africa in the thirties it was an ambitious scheme and Sir Eboo Pirbhai confessed that he and other leading Ismailis were a little out of their depth. They were imaginative businessmen in their own trades. But insurance?

'How do we go about it?' they asked the Imam who told them to



seek expert advice. An Indian insurance technician was invited to Nairobi to set up the company and train Ismailis. A campaign was launched to explain to followers throughout the country the advantage of insuring their property and their lives. Young men were sent overseas to study modern insurance techniques. To avoid the social problems which Ismaili prosperity could create among poverty-stricken neighbours, the Aga Khan founded the East African Muslim Welfare Society to provide funds for mosques, schools and social centres for non-Ismaili Muslims, but co-operation between the different sects did not always run smoothly and in 1968 Karim Aga Khan resigned his offices in the Society which he had inherited from his grandfather.

Europe, when the Aga Khan returned from East Africa, was already shaken by the shock waves which heralded the century's biggest political earthquake. It was an inauspicious moment for him to receive an otherwise richly deserved honour—he was elected President of the League of Nations Assembly. In his presidential address he quoted the great poet Saadi: 'The children of Adam, created of the self-same clay, are members of one body. When one member suffers, all members suffer likewise.' The erudite President saw the sweltering European conflict in terms of Hindu-Muslim relations but never applied Saadi's thoughts to Nazi practices.

He was one of two names which Hitler and Goebbels noted as of tremendous potential propaganda value to the Nazi cause—the other was the Duke of Windsor's. It was probably no coincidence that the ex-King and Imam, leaders without countries, should find themselves in Germany at the same time as guests of Hitler who was just framing the first of his 'last territorial demands'. The Aga Khan saw the Führer at Berchtesgaden where they talked about horses.

Hitler: 'How much is one of your stallions worth?'

Aga Khan: '£30,000.'

Hitler: 'Would you take forty German Mercedes cars instead?'

Aga Khan: 'What would I do with forty Mercedes—set myself up as a motor salesman in Piccadilly?'

Although the Aga Khan was most emphatic that they did not touch on politics, there is reason to believe that weightier subjects also came up. He saw Propaganda Minister Dr Joseph Goebbels in Berlin and it was not long before the meetings between the civilised



easterner and the vulgar Nazi leaders produced repercussions. Broadcasting on B.B.C. radio, the Aga Khan suddenly voiced support for Hitler's demand that Austria and Nazi Germany should be united. It obviously did not occur to him that the German clamour for the so-called Anschluss was the opening gambit in a cunning campaign to subjugate the whole of Europe by one means or another. The Aga Khan's first false step inevitably led to others.

Encouraged by connivance in high places, Hitler marched into Austria and promptly made his next territorial demand which was for the German-speaking Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia. By now, many counted the Aga Khan among the 'appeasers', an influential but short-sighted group of British politicians who tried to buy off Hitler with concession after concession. At the invitation of Editor Geoffrey Dawson, he contributed an astonishing article to the London *Times* which was going through a dark phase. Referring to Neville Chamberlain's visit to Munich to meet Hitler and Mussolini and seal the destruction of Czechoslovakia, the Aga Khan wrote about 'the glorious victory for peace with honour won by the Prime Minister'.

'We are told that in *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote this and that,' the Aga Khan went on. 'But every statesman . . . has said things and suggested courses that he never contemplated carrying out when in power.' Obviously Hitler would not attack France—what for? Hitler could not possibly attack the Ukraine! Hitler's live-and-let-live policy with Poland earned his commendation—a few months later the Nazis virtually razed the country to the ground. 'What Hitler has achieved required outstanding qualities . . . Why not take him at his word?' the Aga Khan asked. In making these painful misjudgements he was in good company which included the Duke of Windsor and the Marquess of Lothian. Good man as he was, he could not visualise the length to which the Hitler gang would go to satisfy a mad ambition and had not yet diagnosed, as he did a year or so later, the Wagnerian death-wish at the root of the German character.

Death, in harsh reality, threatened his beloved mother in her eighty-eighth year. The Aga Khan was at Antibes when news reached him that Lady Ali Shah was gravely ill. All her life she had taken a Turkish bath once a week, followed by massage, manicure and pedicure at her house in Malabar Hill where a special water



system and heated alcoves had been installed. Coming out of her bath one day in November 1937, she suffered a stroke which seriously impaired her faculties.

Determined not to let her die in his absence, the Aga Khan flew to Bombay. She was in a bad way, able to recognise him only during brief spells of consciousness. Knowing that his mother wished to be buried in the soil of a Muslim state and difficult as it was to move the sick old lady, he arranged for her to travel to Baghdad where she was taken to a relative's house. While she held her own, he returned to Europe to join little Karim on his first birthday on December 13 in Gstaad and to see Joan's second baby boy, Amyn, who had been born three months earlier. 'Grandfather' stayed for Christmas which was celebrated for the children's sake, particularly Sadruddin, who was rising five. In the unusual role of family man, Aly showered everybody with gifts, the most generous of men.

Moving about as restlessly as ever, he went on safari with Joan, followed by a tour of Ismaili centres in the Middle East and India. As always he was received with rapturous enthusiasm, and again struck a chord in the hearts of Syria's Ismailis who claimed him as their very own. They were still cheering when his aircraft was already taking him back to Europe.

The Aga Khan was also on the move. He was in Cairo early in 1938 when he was again summoned to his mother's sick bed. Taking the next plane, he reached Baghdad on February 5 and was by his mother's side at three p.m. For an instant her eyes opened and a flicker of joy lit up her features. Two hours later, her head resting in her son's lap, she went (to quote the Aga Khan) 'on the safe and quiet journey from the midst of the living to achieve the peace and happiness for which all Muslims yearn'. Though thousands of Ismailis attended her funeral, the Aga Khan, following Ismaili tradition, did not accompany his mother to her last resting place at Nejef, near Kerbela, where she was reunited with her husband fifty-three years after his death.

It came as a profound shock to the Aga Khan when 'Hitler ripped off the veil of respectability' and gobbled up the whole of Czechoslovakia. So all this talk of self-determination and justice for German minorities was so much eyewash! The last few uneasy months of peace confronted the Imam of the Ismailis with problems not unlike



the Pope's. His spiritual dominion was spread over nations which might soon be at war with each other. It was tempting to keep aloof but when Mussolini's invasion of Albania brought several thousand Muslims under Fascist rule he asked the India Office whether there would be any objection to him writing on their behalf to Mussolini whom he knew personally: 'Most of them belong to the Bektashi Order,' he explained, 'and I would like to plead on purely religious grounds for these people.' The Foreign Office noted cynically that the Aga Khan's advice might help Mussolini to ingratiate himself with his new Muslim subjects. They preferred to see the Duce antagonise the Bektashi but, of course, did not tell the Aga Khan so and replied that the moment for his intervention was not opportune.

Among private affairs which demanded the Aga Khan's instant attention were his stables and stud farms. So as to preserve the precious blood lines intact, he offered them to the British National Stud at a modest price but this was not the moment for Britain to take on such a responsibility.

The flood gates of history opened and for the Aga Khan, as for millions of others, Hitler's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, ended an era. He was angry about Hitler's deliberate act of aggression: 'However, it was not only Hitler's war,' he wrote. 'The terrible fact is that it was the German people's war.' In spite of all their great qualities the Germans seemed afflicted with a romantic self-immolatory streak in their character which was never satisfied with mere success.

But even after hearing Neville Chamberlain announce that Britain and Germany were now at war, he still hoped against hope that an accommodation might be possible. While in Florence, he made another attempt to sell his horses. As far as he could gather, Italy's Foreign Minister Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, was in favour of buying them but the Duce seems to have vetoed the transaction in the end. In the twilight of the 'phoney war', the Aga Khan's Italian excursion inspired all sorts of rumours. As the Wehrmacht overran half of Poland and the Soviets occupied the other half, Hitler's emissaries tried hard to dissuade the allies from continuing the 'futile war'. They were reported to have approached the Aga Khan and to have had 'peace talks' with him in Italy. It was a false report.



Equally false were the stories casting doubt on his loyalty to Britain. The instructions he sent to his followers at the outbreak of war were strong and unequivocal. The first of them were sent to the headquarters of Africa's Ismailis in Zanzibar where they reached his representatives, Mr Jindani and Mr Abdullah Shariff: 'Heartfelt, loyal, unstinted service must be given to the cause of the Empire which is the protector of our faith and liberty,' the Imam's message read. He expressed similar sentiments in his communication to Nairobi's Ismailia Council (President—Count Manji, Secretary—Eboo Pirbhai): 'It is our duty,' he wrote, 'to co-operate with heart and soul for the success of His Majesty, the King-Emperor. Such sincere and complete co-operation will also be in the best interests of Islam . . .'

While he and the Begum went to India, the Aga Khan's racing empire in Europe lost its popular and able proconsul. With the first sound of the bugles, Aly Khan made up his mind to go to war. A British subject resident in France, he had no doubt at all whose side he was on and volunteered for the Foreign Legion, the only French unit which accepted foreigners. A fine linguist with intimate knowledge of Africa and the Middle East, he was a most useful recruit. As Sub-Lieutenant Prince Aly Khan, No. 4702, he was posted to Beirut and attached to the staff of the French General Maxime Weygand.

The Aga Khan returned to Europe in 1940 and went to his house in Antibes—it was not a good moment. The German offensive in the West was imminent and before he had time to settle in, the Wehrmacht's Blitzkrieg on France was under way. He closed down Villa Jane-Andrée and made for neutral Switzerland leaving France in the nick of time before the Germans closed in. In Deauville, incidentally, they found a hundred of the Aga Khan's horses which went the way of all German loot—to Germany.

War also uprooted Princess Joan. Having spent the last summer of peace in Deauville with Karim and Aryn, she worked for a while with the Red Cross before going to join Aly. She took the children by sea from Marseilles to Cairo where a friend put them up and went on to Beirut alone to look for a house. Her choice fell on 'a beautiful villa with a big garden and orange trees' about which she still enthuses; she collected the children and resumed her Red Cross work with the Beirut branch.



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May 1940 changed everything and their stay in Beirut was abruptly cut short. Joan and Aly were dining with General Weygand the night before he was recalled to Paris. The mood was sombre, the situation heavy and ominous. France was conquered, the French divided among themselves. Like other French possessions overseas, Syria faced an indefinite future. The formation of a pro-Nazi French government in Vichy split the military in Beirut; some of them favoured collaboration while others were implacably hostile to the Germans.

Aly was firmly with those who refused to admit defeat. Besides, as British subjects, once the French in Beirut made common cause with Germany, he and his family were in a delicate position and in immediate danger of internment. In spite of their status and wealth, the descendants of the Fatimids were not immune to the agonies of war. They left Beirut in a hurry. While Aly made his way to Palestine with several like-minded French officers, Joan and the children went to Jerusalem where they stayed at the King David Hotel, hub of the British presence in Palestine.

From Palestine Aly went on to Cairo to look for a new military assignment and joined the Wiltshire Yeomanry Regiment among whose officers were many old friends, including his brother-in-law, the Earl of Cadogan, husband of Joan's sister Primrose. He was attached to an Intelligence unit where his influence with the Ismailis in sensitive areas would be extremely valuable. He was enthusiastic and anxious to find employment to suit his talents.

Decisions on the future of the children had to await the advice of the Aga Khan, who was consulted on all important family matters, but communications were difficult and slow and it was some time before his wishes were known. Rather than take Karim and Amyn to England where the evacuation of children from cities was in full swing, it was decided to send them to East Africa where they would be among the Aga Khan's loyal followers. Princess Joan went with them to Nairobi and installed them in the family house in the Caledonian Road. The 'semi-detached' without great charm, which was known as the Aga Khan Bungalow, became Karim's new home. Their mother left him and Amyn in the care of their nurse, and rejoined Aly in Cairo where they set up house together.



CHAPTER IX

THERE is no more congenial setting for melodrama than a luxury hotel in a neutral country when the world around is at war; and certainly none with a finer ambience than the Palace Hotel in St Moritz, one of the most elegant, comfortable and best run in the world. A fussy architectural mixed grill with turrets, alcoves and balconies, the Palace was a perfect home from home for wealthy, very wealthy, people who wanted to opt out of the conflict. It was also inevitably a haunt of international busybodies and dilettantes playing the spy game. The occasional professional secret agent on a busman's holiday gave it verisimilitude.

During the Second World War (as during the First), the Palace was also a most desirable residence for eminent personages like the Aga Khan who could not easily be fitted into a definite category. He was certainly rich but exchange control temporarily cut him off from his sources of income. The war, he used to say, put him in a position not unlike that of King Midas when everything he touched turned to gold. How to get sufficient funds to Switzerland was one of his major worries.

He was, in these hectic months of 1940, an ailing man beginning to look older than his sixty-two years, and, though he had his books and his thoughts and his prayers to occupy him, his active, wide-ranging mind accustomed to civilised combat in drawing-rooms or across conference tables lacked scope in the remote valley where he and the Begum found refuge. The Khedive of Egypt turned up, a kindred spirit in some ways; wealthy Germans too were in and out of the place, usually up to no good and never revealing how they obtained permission to leave the well-guarded confines of the Reich,



nor how they obtained the scarce, tightly-controlled foreign currency to travel in style in times like these.

One of the Germans was Prince Max Hohenlohe, one of the Hitler peace scouts angling for contacts and not averse, if need be, to justifying their *raison d'être* and their expense accounts by highly coloured reports to their paymasters in Berlin. A personable man with fluent English and French, he talked to the Aga Khan in the relaxed, enervating atmosphere of the Palace lounge where all was peace.

Had the Aga Khan lived to see the version of these conversations which Max Hohenlohe passed on to Walter Hewel, the German Foreign Office official at Hitler's headquarters, as it emerged from German official documents after the war, he would have been deeply shocked. Hohenlohe's reports made the Aga Khan appear either a fool or a knave. At the very time when Britain faced a Nazi invasion, Hohenlohe quotes the Aga Khan as saying that he remembered his stay in Germany with much pleasure and was grateful for ever for the consideration accorded to him.

'The Khedive of Egypt,' Hohenlohe continued with his account of the Aga Khan's table talk, 'had agreed with him (the Aga Khan) that on the day the Führer put up for the night in Windsor they would drink a bottle of champagne together . . . If Germany or Italy was thinking of taking over India, he would place himself at our disposal to help organise the country. He was counting for that on his well-known following and on several young maharajahs . . . In his opinion the Führer would attack England directly . . .' The struggle against England, the Aga Khan was supposed to have added, was not a struggle against the English people but against the Jews in whose pay Churchill had been for years . . . If he were to go with these ideas to England, Churchill would lock him up despite his high rank.

'Although the Aga Khan is not always reliable,' Hohenlohe went on, 'his judgement has not been bad by any means. It should be further noted that, although he does not have his funds in England, he has placed them in such a way that he is now in Switzerland hard up for money to such an extent that he asked me whether I could afford to help him out with some cash for a while.' The diatribe put in the Aga Khan's mouth did not sound like the view of an Indian



prince who had worshipped the British royal family since the first weekend he spent at Windsor as Queen Victoria's guest.

Even Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's Foreign Minister, to whom Hohenlohe's reports were sent, regarded the Aga Khan as a partisan of the British and more likely to pass on information to them than vice versa. The German consul in Switzerland was instructed to tell the Aga Khan, if the opportunity arose, that 'we intend to destroy England'. Finally Hohenlohe was told that the Aga Khan's views were noteworthy but his financial interests were so bound up with Britain that he could not be used. When the Hohenlohe reports were published after the war, Aly Khan was angry: 'Ridiculous,' he said, 'my father was passionately pro-British.'

While the Aga Khan became the victim of Nazi agents—although he never once left Switzerland during the war, they spread a rumour that he visited occupied Paris as Hitler's guest—Prince Aly was in Cairo, an even more ambiguous theatre of military operations. Among the non-belligerent Egyptians, some friendly, others hostile, all suspect, the British garrison lived in a twilight between war and peace. Looking west towards Rommel's Afrika Korps in the desert, looking east towards the unstable and uncertain Middle East, Cairo was supply base, leave centre, Intelligence H.Q., meeting place and melting pot of Free French, Free Poles, Free British under a military discipline so relaxed that the war seemed a thousand miles away—and sometimes was.

The social life of the British, in and out of uniform, owed much to the customs and habits of the colonial overlords on which the Aga Khan remarked during the First World War. In 1940 and 1941, Aly took to it as naturally as to the night-clubs of Mayfair or the *boîtes* of the Bois de Boulogne. Joan made their luxurious house at Gezira a favourite meeting place for cocktails or dinner and the popular couple were always surrounded by a large but select band of friends.

If the British were to drive the Vichyites out of Syria, which was high on their list of Middle Eastern priorities, Muslim goodwill was essential and Aly Khan was just the man to win them over. From Jerusalem he broadcast an appeal to them on behalf of Britain: 'As a Muslim,' he told his listeners, 'I feel that British democracy—whatever the differences between Muslims and Britain—has given us religious freedom such as does not exist in totalitarian countries.'



Action suited Aly better than making speeches but on these occasions words did not fail him: 'Some people in eastern countries under British rule,' he said on another occasion, 'may think they have not been given the full independence to which they feel entitled. But I often think they do not appreciate that what independence they enjoy would be fictitious but for British protection. Without British backing they would become easy prey for the aggressive militarist powers which are trying to dominate mankind.'

Aly's propaganda broadcasts were part of the softening-up process which preceded the allied move against Syria. Early in June 1941, British and Free French forces of General Sir Maitland Wilson's army attacked across the border of Palestine. As they advanced, Aly's Ismaili friends welcomed Wilson's men with open arms. But there was a good deal of fighting. Although a member of the General's staff, Aly frequently raced up to the front by car, mindless of enemy fire, more like a sportsman hunting for prey than a soldier. Such courage earned him admiration and official recognition. Entranced by their brief encounters with the Imam's dashing son, local Ismailis were only too anxious to serve the cause he espoused. At the end of the successful operation, Aly asked permission to switch to the Free French. It was readily given and General Georges Catroux, Free French High Commissioner in Syria, appointed him his *chef de cabinet*. He was back in Beirut where Joan was soon reunited with him.

News of their two little boys in Nairobi was comforting. Karim and Aryn were kept so busy they had little time to miss their parents. From the children's point of view the Aga Khan Bungalow was an ideal home—the jungle garden full of parakeets and budgerigars, the tennis-court, the big lawns. Karim, Princess Joan remembers, had all his lead soldiers with him—a present from grandfather—and fought many a war of his own. Both boys adored Doris Lyon, their governess, and loved Kaderali, the young Ismaili missionary who became their tutor: 'He was an enchanting young man,' their mother recalled, 'but though they loved him they gave him a terrible time. He had only to turn his head and they were out of the window and in the garden.'

Kaderali taught them their prayers and Arabic nursery rhymes which are as charming and simple as European. As soon as they



could understand they learned all about the Prophet and the history of Islam but there was no question at this stage of acquainting them with the intricacies of the Ismaili sect into which they were born. As a boy, Karim was not aware of the split between Sunnis and Shias or between Ismailis and other Shias: 'You learn your prayers which do not reflect the different nuances,' Karim Aga Khan told me on one occasion, 'what we were concerned with as boys was the practice of Islam, not the historical differences.'

From the age of four Karim received the rudiments of an English education from Miss Lyon. Amyn followed not far behind. Mrs Bishop, the English housekeeper, completed the staff at Nairobi. Eboo Pirbhai kept an eye on the boys, and his sons often played with them, but there were very few European children—one who came to tea now and then was Princess Elisabeth, daughter of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, who lived in exile just outside Nairobi.

The routine was only interrupted on the rare occasion when their father came to Nairobi to spend his leave with them. Even as a child, Karim could feel the magnetism of his personality. He made a dash-ing officer: 'It was in uniform that I first remember seeing my father,' the young Aga Khan told me. 'I am still conscious of how impressive he was—his dynamism, his life-force. He seemed so alive and alert and always on the move.' They played games: 'He would go out and play a man's game—badminton, football, tennis. He was a man's man,' Karim said, 'to me he was a friend even at a very young age.' The early impression persisted and, as Karim grew older, his friendship with Aly grew stronger. He still talks about his late father with a tenderness in his voice which betrays his deep affection.

The war, the distance and several years still separated the boy from his first conscious encounter with his grandfather, whose contacts with the Ismaili communities and with his family in East Africa were spasmodic and sparse. The Aga Khan was commuting between St Moritz, Zürich and Geneva but security measures and censorship on all sides delayed news from the outside world. What trickled through frequently tempted him to bring his experience to bear on the momentous events. When Persia, the land of his fathers, threatened to be drawn into the conflict the temptation became irresistible.



Although the Kajar dynasty had long given way to a new head of state, Reza Shah Pahlevi, a cavalry man and former Minister of War, the Aga Khan's concern was intense. Once the Soviets joined in the war against Hitler, the western allies would need a land connection with their new ally but Reza Shah took the view that the passage of allied troops and war materials across his territory would infringe Persian independence. The Aga Khan was convinced that Britain could not tolerate such a situation and would try to bring Persia into line. Through the British Consul in Geneva, he sent a telegram to the Shah urging him to co-operate with the British and not to jeopardise his throne. Was it not better to enter the war as an honoured ally than to be forced into it as a satellite? By the time the telegram reached Tehran, British forces from India had already entered Persia. The recalcitrant Shah was sent into exile but his son, the current Shah, was allowed to succeed to the throne.

Before other deserving causes could lure him into the diplomatic arena again, the Swiss government asked the Aga Khan to refrain from all political activity. Worried lest he exerted his influence on behalf of the western allies, the Germans, who had failed to recruit him, were thought to have asked the Swiss to muzzle him. What little he heard from India would have afforded him ample scope for intervention. Congress protested against Britain taking India into the war 'against her will' but Gandhi did not forswear his pacifism and did not 'seek an independence out of Britain's ruin'.

Hindu pressure nevertheless increased so much that Mohammed Ali Jinnah made it clear that India's Muslims did not want to exchange a British raj for a Hindu raj. The Aga Khan saw British policy veering towards the Hindus when Labour and Liberal members of the war cabinet made their weight felt and America entered the war and pressed Britain to give up her imperialist stance. The possibility of partition was already being discussed and the idea of a separate Muslim state called Pakistan was taking root.

The Aga Khan had to sit by idly watching the confused situation from afar. Civil disobedience and arrests alternated with attempts to reconcile the warring factions. Britain's austere and pro-Indian British Labour Minister Sir Stafford Cripps led a mission to India to offer independence after the war but it failed because, in Sir Stafford's words, 'past distrust has proved too strong to allow of



present agreement.' Angrily Congress called on the Indian people not to comply with British military requirements and demanded an immediate end to British rule in India.

In August 1942, faced with the threat of widespread violence, the British government ordered the arrest of Gandhi. It was at this stage that the Aga Khan, to spare the Mahatma another spell in prison, offered his palace in Poona, Yarovda Palace, as 'alternative accommodation'. Gandhi appreciated the gesture but insisted on datelining his letters from the palace 'Detention Centre, Poona'. Gandhi's wife Kasturbar died in the palace and was cremated in the grounds.

The old Aga's gesture to Gandhi was his last war-time contact with Indian affairs. He had other problems to occupy his mind. So low were his finances that he decided to sell Bahram and Mahmoud to America. The British racing community with their almost proprietary pride in the Aga Khan's two most famous horses was bitter. The Aga Khan's excuse was that he needed the money but when he was called to account for his surprising decision, he maintained that he virtually gave the horses away—he received £40,000 for Bahram and only £20,000 for Mahmoud: 'According to the value prevailing they were worth £175,000 and possibly £200,000,' he explained. 'When the offer for these two horses was made, I was in a very difficult position; I had to decide whether I should sell two of the best products of my stud or break up the whole stud by selling my mares and thereby selling blood lines I had built up between 1921 and 1940 at tremendous cost and labour.'

Referring to his illness, his lack of funds in Switzerland and the war restrictions, he added: 'My bankers found out that if I produced new dollars and invested the same in England, they would be able to advance me enough Swiss francs to allow me and my family to live in Switzerland . . . During those four and a half years, my family and myself lived on the sale of these two horses.'

Life offered few compensations. The Aga Khan's condition deteriorated. Surgeons and other specialists became regular visitors. He could no longer play golf or take walks but it was a long time before the source of his difficulties was found—not, in fact, until after the war when he was examined in France and was operated on for a tumour which was happily non-malignant. Ill health, com-



bined with his restricted existence and his financial worries, put a strain on his marriage. Although living in close proximity in a little country, he and the Begum grew apart. Altogether it was an unhappy time for the Aga Khan, probably the worst in his life.

While he was limited to only occasional exchanges with his followers, Aly was able to keep in personal touch with many of them. Whenever he could get away from his military duties, he visited Ismailis as representative of the Imam. The affection of the Syrians was undimmed; they seemed to love and admire him even more than the remote Imam. Aly's speeches were brief, peppery but serious; though casual and informal in some ways, he never allowed his attention to stray from the prescribed religious rites. From Damascus he flew to Bombay but managed to get back to Nairobi for a big occasion in the life of Karim.

By the time he was seven, the boy had progressed so well with his religious education, Kaderali was confident that he was quite capable of leading the community in prayer. Easter, 1943, was the date chosen for his début in the *jamatkhana* and on the morning of the appointed day, amid great excitement, dressed in a grey sherwani, white jodhpurs and black astrakhan hat, he faced his grandfather's followers. Princess Joan was a little anxious as she watched him taking his place at the head of the community. She had no cause to worry. Her son did not betray his nervousness, was word perfect and came through the difficult ceremony without faltering, 'A great accomplishment for such a small boy,' Princess Joan said, heaving a sigh of relief in memory of the day.

Before the end of 1943, the Aga Khan's family received a piece of personal news from him which did not come entirely as a surprise. He informed them that his marriage to Princess Jane-Andrée was over, dissolved by mutual consent in a civil court in Geneva, but that their affection, respect and true friendship for each other were in no way impaired. Custody of ten-year-old Sadruddin went to the father. To forestall comments about yet another divorce, the Aga Khan had a few pointed things to say about western laws which often compelled an unhappy marriage to continue and were as difficult to understand for Muslims as it was for Christians to realise 'the practical and contractual basis of the Islamic idea of marriage'.

The family had been aware for some time of the Aga Khan's



friendship with the tall, stately and very beautiful Mademoiselle Yvette Labrousse, a French railway shunter's daughter who was born at Sete, near Marseilles, and grew up in a flat in Cannes overlooking the hill of Le Cannet. Elected 'Miss Lyon' at the age of twenty-four, Yvette had gone on to become 'Miss France of 1930' and, with society opening all doors for a beauty queen of such charm and grace, was frequently seen in smart places on either shore of the Mediterranean. She was living in Cairo in the late thirties and was dining one evening at Mena House, the romantic hotel by the Pyramids, when the Aga Khan first met her. He was surprised to hear that she had adopted the Muslim faith, probably because of her humble origin, or, as the Aga Khan put it, because of the complete absence of snobbery and prejudice which is basic to Islam. They soon met again in Europe.

According to Gordon Young, the respected British author and journalist (writing in the *Daily Mail* of March 24, 1953), there was an Islamic wedding in Cairo shortly after the Mena House meeting. The same author who often talked to Yvette, mentioned in a later issue (April 9, 1956) that she and the Aga Khan bought a site at Le Cannet, an abandoned olive grove with only one living tree: 'That was in 1937,' Gordon Young quotes her as saying, 'I looked round the Riviera for a house and failed to find anything I really liked, so I decided to build one for ourselves . . .'

Official records show that the Aga Khan entered into the state of matrimony for the fourth time in 1944, thirteen months after his divorce from Begum Jane-Andrée. His health was improving, the war was moving into its final phase, there was even a heartening victory on the turf—Tehran, leased from Aly, won England's last war-time Derby for him. Marriage was another step on the road to recovery. At thirty-eight, Mademoiselle Labrousse was thirty years younger than her groom when they presented themselves at the parlour of the Mayor of Vevey, a small watering place by the Lac Léman not far from Aix-les-Bains where the Aga Khan had taken his third wife fifteen years earlier. As on the previous occasion, the civil ceremony was followed by a Muslim wedding. The new Begum took the name Om Habibah, after one of the Prophet's wives, and the Aga Khan felt he had at last been granted 'the real and wonderful haven of a true union of mind and soul'.



While a new wife shared his father's life in Switzerland, the gossips of Cairo were busily spreading rumours about Aly's amorous adventures. Like those circulating in London and Paris before the war, they were often grossly exaggerated. He had only to be seen talking to a woman over a cocktail or dancing at a dinner party and it was assumed as a matter of course that he had an affair with her. Egyptian girls, Polish girls, French girls—the historians of Aly's love life covered a wide area of speculation. What fed the rumours was his habit of paying every woman in his company such intense attention as if she were the only one in the world.

One who fell into this category was a dark-haired girl known as Christina Granville, who was serving in the FANYS (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry), a cover organisation for British secret agents. The daughter of a Polish aristocrat and widow of a Polish secret service agent who was killed by the Nazis, Christina—real name: Krystyna Gizycka—made her way to England to fight against his murderers, and was parachuted into Nazi-occupied Rumania to organise the escape of several important people. After her return from this mission, she met Aly in Cairo and was immediately attracted to him.

Gossip about their association pursued him even to the small Tripolitanian town to which he was posted as military governor as soon as the British Eighth Army had driven out Rommel's Afrika Korps. Although a lieutenant-colonel, he was, to quote Mr A. J. Butcher, British journalist and former staff sergeant in North Africa, 'unassuming and completely different from the descriptions in the more imaginative sections of the world's Press'. Mr Butcher remembered Aly playing 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes' on a rather battered piano in the bombed out local cinema. He was just as much at ease with senior N.C.O.'s, though they sometimes pulled his leg about his affairs of the heart, as with his fellow officers, who were a little inhibited in the company of such a famous figure.

On one of his flying visits to Nairobi followed by a tour of Ismaili centres in East Africa, he stopped over at Mwanza by Lake Victoria in the British mandated territory of Tanganyika (now Tanzania) where he stayed with the Fancy family, the city's leading Ismailis, who had come from India in 1937, started a grocery store, expanded into exports and imports, prospered and came to own a cotton



factory. Aly made friends with the son of the house, Amirali Fancy who was devoting his whole spare time to the community.

At Aly's suggestion, Amirali Fancy was appointed to the local Ismaili Council, the beginning of a steep rise in the community. He returned to the sub-continent when Pakistan emerged to independence, and settled in Karachi to become one of the country's leading industrialists and head of the Ismailia Federal Council of Pakistan: 'What struck me about Prince Aly,' Mr Fancy told me, recalling their first meeting, 'was not only his tremendous energy but his infinite goodwill and sympathy and eagerness to help the community.'

After his long spell in the desert, Lieutenant-Colonel Prince Aly Khan was eager to get back to Europe but it was a year before an opportunity offered itself. It came when, soon after the allied invasion of Hitler's 'Fortress Europe' across the English Channel, Anglo-American forces were massing for an invasion of southern France to take the German enemy in the rear. When Aly found out that United States troops would be in the vanguard of the new military venture, he asked to be transferred to the U.S. Army, was granted a commission and attached to a unit about to cross the Mediterranean. He made the trip aboard a landing craft and, drawn towards the Riviera, like a homing bird, disembarked at St Tropez among the first allied troops to set foot on the soil of southern France. The date was August 15, 1944.

Christina Granville, too, had a part in the invasion. Even before the allied landing she was parachuted into France, made contact with the French underground, helped to liberate three British officers from a Vichy French prison (one of them writer Xan Fielding) who were needed to assist with the allied occupation. When Aly met Christina again she told him her fantastic story—how she had twice fallen into the hands of the Gestapo, escaped twice and carried on her dangerous work. Christina's luck ran out after the war. She never found her way back to a routine life. She disappeared and was not heard of again until she was found stabbed to death in a little hotel in Kensington, London, in 1952.

Aly did not linger in St Tropez, commandeered a jeep and made off in the direction of Cannes. The familiar Carlton Hotel, meeting place of Riviera habitués in happier days, was shuttered up but



when he presented himself at a side door he was greeted as a liberator. His next destination was Cap d'Antibes and the Villa Jane-Andrée which had escaped seizure by the Germans because a friend of the former Begum had spread her protective wings over it and kept the rapacious Wehrmacht at bay.

At the same time Aly learned that the Nazis had not allowed the house in Maisons Lafitte to slip through their fingers. Requisitioned soon after the conquest of France it became Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's private residence when Hitler transferred him from Africa to France. It would not be long before this house, too, could be restored to its rightful owners but in the meantime Aly received a new assignment. It was to act as British liaison officer with an Intelligence unit belonging to the U.S. Sixth Army Group with which he had come across from Libya.

His immediate superior was Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Cabot Lodge, former U.S. Senator from Massachusetts and member of a leading Boston family (who was destined to play a major role in American affairs). The two comrades in arms with the vastly different backgrounds hit it off splendidly. Colonel Lodge knew Aly's reputation as a playboy and was all the more pleasantly surprised by his dedication and stamina. Like everybody else he was captivated by Aly's pleasant manner and manly qualities. Gordon Grand, a major serving with the same unit, described Aly's three outstanding qualities as physical vitality, humility and love of people. He told Leonard Slater that Aly was completely unpretentious and that money meant nothing to him.

By the time the Germans laid down their arms, his unit had reached the Vosges mountains. By this time, too, Aly proudly wore the U.S. Army Bronze Star. The citation, signed by General J. L. Devers, Commander of the U.S. Sixth Army Group, praised him for his 'tireless energy, marked endeavour and constant willingness to undertake any task regardless either of its hazards or its irksomeness'. The French gave him the Légion d'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre with palm. The French citation, signed by Generals Juin and de Gaulle—later Field Marshal Juin and President de Gaulle—which reached him after the war spelled out his accomplishments: 'Aly Khan, Lieutenant-Colonel of the British Army,' it said, 'has shown in his functions as liaison officer for General Devers with the



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First French Army military qualities as brilliant as those which he displayed in 1939-40 as Second-Lieutenant in the Foreign Legion in Syria and later as Intelligence Officer with the French staff. During the period from August 15, 1944, until March 1945, frequently sent on missions to the front, he won the admiration of all by his bravery under fire and complete disregard of danger, by his intelligence, tact and character, and he was thus able to render the highest possible service to the allied army.'

Alerted by Aly, friends in several armies moving in on Germany were on the look-out for his and his father's horses which the Nazis had taken from their French stables as loot. He was delighted to receive a message from U.S. General George Patton, whose storming finish had carried his troops farther east than any other, which said that the horses had been traced to the German National Stud at Altefelt but his troops were still some distance away. Because Soviet armies were fast approaching, no time was to be lost. With a jeep and a horse-trailer and a single G.I. to help him, Aly dashed across Germany but found the Germans still in control at Altefelt. It was a situation after his heart. At the point of a gun he demanded the return of his horses. With Robert Muller who had gone into German captivity with the horses, he organised their removal, carting them two by two across the French border in an expedition which took five days and five nights.

Even before the armistice was signed, but with France already safely in the hands of the western allies, Sir Duff Cooper, the British Ambassador in Paris, enabled the Aga Khan to escape from his self-imposed exile and smoothed his path from Geneva to Marseilles. He and his new Begum accepted the hospitality of the U.S. army, who put them up in one of the many requisitioned elegant and comfortable houses on the coast. From Marseilles the couple soon took off for the warmer climate of Cairo.

From Cairo, even before their arrival, Joan Aly Khan, who had been working with military welfare organisations, went post-haste to Nairobi to pick up her sons Karim and Amyn. Accompanied by the loyal Miss Lyon they stopped over in Greece before flying to Paris where they opened up Aly's house in the rue de Prony. After waiting several days for their luggage, which was too voluminous to come with them by air, it was decided to send the children and Miss Lyon



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to Switzerland rather than England where conditions were still difficult and rations poor. They were installed in a rented chalet in Gstaad, the beautiful and invigorating mountain resort conveniently near the old Aga Khan's Lausanne residence.

Although he briefly contemplated making the army his career, Aly was soon on the move as well—there was so much to do, so many things needing his attention. Even before his demobilisation he flew to England, went to the races, and travelled on to Ireland to inspect Gilttown of which he was now part owner. He was full of plans for the studs and the stables and anxious to recapture the old glory of the famous colours. Then a little heavy-hearted, he went to meet Joan. His extravaganzas had not remained hidden from her and deepened the estrangement which was the result of their long separation.

More important even than their own problem was the future of the boys. Joan would have preferred them to be brought up in England where her son, Patrick Guinness, was being educated and where her three sisters (Countess of Cadogan, Duchess of Bedford, Lady Ebury) and their children provided a ready-made family circle but she realised that the destiny of an Ismaili prince demanded a cosmopolitan background. After consultations with the old Aga it was decided to send Karim and Amyn to Le Rosay, the 'school of princes' at their doorstep in Gstaad where the Duke of Kent, several other boys of royal antecedents and the sons of many eastern rulers received their education.

By this time the Aga Khan was back in East Africa where he and the Begum were met by an upsurge of affection and emotion. The Imam of the Ismailis was in his religious element but his first concern was to prepare the community for the problems of the post-war era and the severe competition in trade and industry in which only the fittest would be able to survive. What he had mapped out in years of contemplation in Switzerland could now be put into operation. The Imam called an economic conference in Nairobi to launch a series of co-operative societies in the East African territories—sixteen such societies sprang up as a result. Next he introduced plans to disperse Ismailis into small trading areas reversing a trend to congregate in the big towns. He told his followers to get together and establish wholesale businesses. The head of East Africa's Ismailis, Bahadurali K. S.



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Verjee, a Kampala lawyer, said: 'Our Most Reverend Spiritual Father has given us the fundamentals . . .'

The adoration was building up towards a great celebration to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Aga Khan's Imam, his Diamond Jubilee, when 'Our August and Spiritual Father' was to be weighed against diamonds as he had been weighed against gold ten years earlier. The actual date of the Jubilee was August 18, 1945, but the Imam asked his followers to be patient. The immediate post-war period, he felt, was not an auspicious time for such a ceremony. He suggested—and the Imam's suggestion was an order—that the Diamond Jubilee should be celebrated in the following year, in March 1946 in Bombay and four months later in Dar-es-Salaam. For the Aga Khan it was a welcome opportunity to give 'My People' a new outlook, a new mentality, a new direction towards modern times.

What mattered most was that, after the dark years of the war, the Imam and his followers were reunited.



CHAPTER X

AT the age of nine, Karim was a handsome, quiet boy with a fine physique and a serious bent, more studious than his brother Amyn—later, their mother told me, the trends were reversed. A mop of dark hair, soulful eyes and a wide, pleasant smile communicated only the slightest hint of his eastern antecedents. Like his brother, Karim spoke English and French fluently, both had a smattering of Arabic. Monsieur Carmal, the headmaster of Le Rosay, whom Princess Joan went to see about the boys, was happy to accept them for his school. He already had a number of Muslim pupils, he told her, who were receiving religious instruction by private arrangements but as Karim and Amyn were the grandsons of the Imam of the Ismailis and since the office would eventually come down to Karim, it was thought important that he should continue to have individual religious tuition. Aligarh University, consulted by the Aga Khan, recommended a young student of Islam, Mustafa Kamil, who was summoned to Europe and engaged as Karim's religious teacher, now edits *Africa Ismaili*, a weekly published in Nairobi.

When the old Aga returned from Africa and was staying in Lausanne, the boys were taken to see him: 'An extraordinary relationship developed between my father-in-law and my elder son,' Princess Joan recalls, '“K” always talked to his grandfather as if they were contemporaries. There was a powerful bond between them.' It was probably due to grandfather's influence that Karim was mature beyond his age without forgoing the pleasures of a typical teenager's life. Karim—but not Amyn—liked rowing, became very good with his sculls and also played football well. Both he and Amyn liked skiing and tennis. Although very close, the brothers were different in character and, as their mother put it, 'didn't collect the same things'.

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Karim saw little of his father, who was constantly on the move from country to country, from continent to continent but looked upon the South of France as his base. Aly paid £30,000 for the Château de l'Horizon, a fine house between Nice and Cannes which was originally built for the late American actress Maxine Elliot. Surrounded by a big white wall and separated from the main coastal road by the railway which runs a little too close for comfort, the Château, with the terrace overlooking the sea and an outsize swimming pool, was modern, informal, comfortable rather than stately and oriental. Aly, with his taste for *objets d'art* inherited from his mother, acquired some first-rate paintings including a Dégas and some Utrillos and Raoul Dufys, which were his favourites.

The large living-room with the wide, long couch and a colourful portrait of the Aga Khan on the wall was usually teeming with visitors and there were rarely fewer than a dozen people for lunch. Mario Magliano managed the household but some guests felt that he was not as hospitable as his generous nephew would wish him to be. Two other fixtures were Aly's Ismaili servant, whom he called 'Tutti' although his name was believed to be Hussein, and Emrys Williams who acted as chauffeur and bodyguard. The energetic host swam, played tennis, toured the Riviera high spots (preferring ice-cream to alcoholic drinks), and met his innumerable friends, some of whom joined the roll of the Château's guests at a moment's notice and often stayed on long after Aly had gone off to Paris or London or farther afield. Most of his trips were made in hired aircraft until de Havilland built him a twin-engined monoplane which he later christened 'Avenger' after one of his horses. As pilot he engaged John Lancaster, a war-time friend and frequent companion.

The Aga Khan also returned to the Riviera where he stayed at 'Yakimour', the villa he had built for the Begum and named after her—Yaki was his pet name for her, based on her initials—and *amour*. She preferred saris to European clothes and owned three hundred of them, and as many pairs of shoes. The jewels her husband gave her soon added up to a unique collection. She, in turn, looked after him with devotion and patience. They made a happy couple.

Relations between the Aga and his son, on the other hand, were far from harmonious. He did not approve of Aly's mode of life, was



apprehensive about his flights in the Avenger in all weathers, his reckless courage on fast horses and his motoring at break-neck speed, which filled him with foreboding. If he was short-tempered with his son, it was a reflex action to his hidden fear that he might lose him. Aly was rarely at ease in his father's company.

There was no outward sign of tension early in March 1946 when the whole family embarked for India and one of the great occasions in the Aga Khan's life. It was bound to be ample compensation for the deprivation and isolation of the war years. The Khoja community was in a state of mounting religious fervour as the committee of Ismaili nobles in charge of the preparations for the Imam's Diamond Jubilee reached the climax of many months' work. In the thirteen hundred years' history of the sect, only two of Hazar Imam's predecessors—one of them the Aga Khan's grandfather—had occupied the august office as long; under no previous leader had the community made such spectacular progress. Much of it was due to the unique integration of religious and secular interests which the Aga Khan preached and practised—'Ismailis are not like Hindus, there is no withdrawal from the world; they are no Yogis', I was recently told by Mr A. M. Sadaruddin, an erudite Ismaili in East Africa.

The generosity with which the community approached the Jubilee was a measure of the regard in which they held their leader. Even before he and his family set out for Bombay, a British battleship, H.M.S. Devonshire, was heading towards the Indian Ocean with diamonds worth £640,000, the amount the community had collected to hand over to the Imam as an outright gift. Kept in strong metal boxes and under constant guard, the diamonds were on loan from the London Diamond Syndicate. When the battleship's progress seemed too slow, boxes and guards were transferred to a flying boat for the final lap. They arrived at the same time as the Aga Khan.

For days, indeed weeks ahead, his followers had been converging on Bombay from every part of the sub-continent and even farther afield. At the appointed time—the afternoon of Sunday, March 10, 1946—over one hundred thousand of them were at the Brabourne Stadium, happily, expectantly peering towards the raised platform in the centre and the elaborate weighing machine with the big face more than ten feet up, one huge scale balanced against a base with a comfortable easy-chair. Fourteen ruling princes, including the



Maharajahs of Kashmir and Baroda and the Ruler of Nawanagar were among the guests of honour.

A tremendous cheer greeted the Imam who appeared dressed in a long white silk robe spangled with silver and a turban threaded with gold. By his side, even more spectacular, the Begum was in a white sari studded with 1,200 diamonds worth some £45,000. Messages of goodwill from King Farouk of Egypt, the Shah of Persia, the King of Afghanistan and from Mahatma Gandhi were among those read out before the Mayor of Bombay started the weighing ceremony.

Only intimates were aware of the little drama which preceded the occasion. Because those who made the biggest contribution would be the first to place boxes with the equivalent of their donations in diamonds on the scales—to be followed by those with smaller offerings—the amount of each donation was noted in advance and the notes placed in sealed envelopes. When they were opened, a modestly endowed printer appeared to have outdone Pakistan's richest Ismaili in generosity and earned the privilege of placing the first box of diamonds on the scales. Angrily, the rich man protested and wanted to increase his donation so as to head the list and be the first to pay homage to the Imam. The Aga Khan would have none of it: 'I will not tolerate that,' he said and refused to permit the change. The printer remained at the head of the queue of the diamond-bearing Ismaili nobles.

Seated in the easy-chair on the scales, the Aga Khan looked on as the metal boxes, one after the other, were placed in position with slow deliberation and great formality to balance his weight which turned out to be 243½ lb, one stone (fourteen pounds) heavier than at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of 1936. When the last box was on the scales, a wealthy Khoja lady broke ranks, mounted the platform and produced a fistful of diamonds to add a personal gift to the communal offering.

Thanking his 'spiritual children', the Aga Khan blessed the crowd before driving through Bombay's beflagged and illuminated streets to his floodlit place. Pride and gratitude seemed to struggle for expression while his lips mumbled prayers. The diamonds were flown back to London to serve their purpose another day and the equivalent of their value was handed over to the Imam who announced that he was creating a trust fund for the community's



economic and educational welfare. Not a penny went into his own pocket.

Preparations for a similar ceremony in East Africa were well on the way and enthusiasm among Ismailis there was as great. News of the mounting excitement reached the Aga Khan in Switzerland but his doctors were concerned about the effects of constant travel and heavy ceremonial duties on his health. They prescribed a course of injections and advised him—if he insisted on carrying out his heavy programme—to make arrangements for the treatment to be continued wherever he was. He was still in need of constant medical attention when he reached East Africa.

Taking up residence at his Bungalow in the Caledonian Road where his two grandsons had spent the war years, the first thing the Aga Khan did was to look for a capable doctor to continue the treatment prescribed in Switzerland; he was advised to consult Dr Guy Johnson, an English doctor who first came to Nairobi in 1935 for a year but liked the country so much that he stayed on—and is still there: ‘I was asked to present myself at the Bungalow,’ Dr Johnson told me in his pleasant house in the Sykes Road in Nairobi where he keeps many mementoes of the Aga Khan’s 1946 visit.

Before the doctor could continue his Swiss colleague’s treatment, the Aga Khan developed pneumonia and had to be given penicillin every three hours, day and night. Dr Johnson who was running two practices and working long hours at the time because his partner was in England, offered to give the patient the day-time injections and arrange for a nursing sister from the hospital to administer them at three, six and nine a.m.: ‘Not on your life!’ the Aga Khan told him, ‘I am not having a nursing sister. You do it!’ His word was a command. Dr Johnson did as he was told and the Aga Khan laid on transport but after the nine p.m. injection told the doctor: ‘You can’t go home now. Stay the night, sleep here and we will call you at three a.m.’

That night the doctor found a bottle of Dimple Haig whisky by his bedside: ‘I could visualise the Aga Khan thinking what he could give me,’ he mused. ‘He was the kind of big man with a very human touch, always thinking of little personal things to give pleasure to others!’ He was also most meticulous about his treatment but one evening when Dr Johnson arrived at nine p.m. sharp, the Aga Khan



was in his dressing gown playing backgammon with the Begum: 'Would you mind waiting?' he asked the doctor. 'This is very important. I can't stop now—she is winning and I am losing.'

The Aga Khan's inquiring mind never ceased working and, whatever it was, he wanted to know the why and the wherefore: 'There was no more knowledgeable patient,' Dr Johnson said. 'He knew more about more subjects than any other man, including medicine . . .' When he inquired about a prescription he was given and was told that it was sulphadimidine, he promptly asked: 'Why not sulphadiazine?' Dr Johnson explained that the drug he was giving him was an improvement on the one he had been taking: 'In what way?' the Aga Khan wanted to know and was told that it was less toxic: 'God help me,' Dr Johnson said, 'if I could not give him an answer and an adequate explanation . . .!'

From the Middle East, from Abyssinia, from the Congo and from South Africa the Aga Khan's followers came for the weighing ceremony which had brought him to Africa, to the big sports ground of the Aga Khan Club in Dar-es-Salaam which was packed with seventy thousand people, the British Colonial Secretary and governors of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda among them.

The final preparations for the weighing were completed. Dr Johnson was giving his patient a last check-up when an attendant told the Aga Khan that a number of people wanted to see him to tell him how best to use the collected funds: 'The Aga Khan was livid,' Dr Johnson recalled. 'He stamped his foot and refused to go on with the ceremony until he received a written assurance that this was a free and unconditional gift.' As a small concession he sent a message to say that these people could indicate how they thought the money ought to be used but added pointedly that this did not mean he would necessarily obey their wishes: 'I may agree to spend the money one way,' he said, 'or I may change my mind and spend it another way!' This little matter settled he took the Begum's hand and led her out to a rapturous welcome.

After an address celebrating him as 'one of the great figures of the age', he mounted the scales and watched the heads of Africa's leading Ismaili families, one after another, placing the boxes with the diamonds on the scales but still kept a watchful eye on ceremonial details: 'Tell the Boy Scouts to move into position now!' he told the



aide: 'Now is the time for the procession to start moving!' he told another. He was alert but obviously tired. His weight balanced the diamonds at 243 lb—their value was £684,000—which meant that he had lost half a pound since Bombay four months earlier. The Begum, Aly and Sadruddin were also given gifts of diamonds.

Heaving himself up to address the crowd, the Aga stressed that the gift to him was unconditional but added pointedly: 'I do not wish to take this money for myself but want to use it as I think best for my spiritual children.' As in Pakistan, he announced the creation of a trust, the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust, to which he was giving the money as an absolute gift, the greater part of it to go towards a new financial structure for the community. Co-operative societies, banks and building societies would be able to draw sums equal to their capital, mostly at three per cent but no more than six per cent in any circumstances. To bring the Trust up to one million, the Aga Khan made a personal contribution of over £300,000.

After the ceremony he went on a tour of community centres (including a brief excursion to South Africa). In Mwanza Amirali Fancy acted as his aide-de-camp and honorary chauffeur. Hundreds of Ismailis cherish the memory of brief encounters with the Imam. Mr A. M. Sadaruddin recalled meeting him on this occasion: 'What is your job?' the Imam asked and Sadaruddin replied that he was a writer and journalist. Shaking his head sorrowfully, the Aga Khan told him: 'I am afraid you will never be rich.' He patiently pondered over the problems of his humblest follower; his advice was usually simple and direct but he always backed it up: 'Go and start a dress shop in Dar-es-Salaam,' he told one Ismaili, 'and send me a telegram when you have opened it!' When the telegram arrived, he asked the British Governor and other prominent friends to visit it and make small purchases. Others followed suit and the business prospered. Instructions, even if they affected the whole community, were not always written down but passed on by word of mouth.

The Begum thought the Aga Khan was doing too much and warned him that he was taking risks with his health. Once she ticked him off for going out in short trousers. She had reason to be worried. He was clearly overtaxing his strength. At Dar-es-Salaam he fell ill and Dr Johnson was called to his sick bed and strongly advised him to return home. A flying boat was chartered to take him to Europe:



'Have a good trip, Your Highness!' Dr Johnson said and turned to go but the Aga Khan flared up: 'What are you saying? You are coming along, at least as far as Cairo.' At Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, specialists were summoned to the Aga's bedside in the middle of the night but they, too, thought he ought to return to his own home. Accompanied by the Begum and Dr Johnson, he flew on to Marseilles and Nice where Aly was waiting at the airport. He was driven straight to Le Cannet.

Dr Johnson kept telling him that the prostate gland was the cause of the trouble but he pooh-poohed it: 'One does not argue with the Aga Khan,' Dr Johnson told me with a sigh. He handed the patient over to his own doctor before the flying boat took him back to East Africa. Some months later the Aga Khan wrote that he had had a prostate operation: 'You did guess right!' he conceded. ('Guess?' Dr Johnson commented.) In the same operation surgeons removed the growth which had been the source of much pain and discomfort.

1947, as the Aga Khan noted, was India's year of destiny. Though he had briefly seen the Mahatma and the Qaid-i-Azam (Mohammed Ali Jinnah) at the time of the Jubilee, he had had no part in the acrimonious final struggle for Indian independence but when the British government recognised that there were two different Indias and agreed to partition, an old dream became reality. Lord Mountbatten, one of Britain's outstanding war leaders, went to Delhi as Viceroy to bring British rule to an end and hand over responsibility to two independent states, India and Pakistan. The date set for the final transfer of power was August 15, 1947.

The Aga Khan could justly claim that—as the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton—the independent, sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh. But he was acutely aware of the immense problem partition presented. To separate Muslims from Hindus, Sikhs from both and the Princes from their states meant tearing apart the very fabric of society. The authority of the police and the army was undermined by the long power vacuum; in mixed states (Bengal and the Punjab), which were cut in half by the new frontier, there were communal riots, massacres, rape, arson, destruction and suffering on a frightening scale.

Refugees scrambled in all directions to find safety among people



of their own faith. Tens of thousands of Ismailis taking with them no more than they could carry on their shoulders made for the two wings of Pakistan looking for a roof over their heads, even if only a tent or a piece of corrugated iron. To give these hapless people a new start demanded a big effort and not a few sacrifices from the Ismaili community. On the other hand, this great new independent Muslim state also lured many Ismailis who had gone out, as the Prophet commanded, to other parts of the world to spread the gospel of Islam. Among those who were now drawn back to the sub-continent and the new Pakistan were members of the Fancy family. Amirali Fancy, too, left Mwanza and moved to Karachi where he established himself in business.

For the Aga Khan the Indian upheaval raised the question not only of his personal properties but also of the assets of the Ismaili community, which were closely linked.

He had to consider the possibility of economic restrictions on Indian nationals or people resident in India. The application of Muslim law to his personal affairs demanded the attention of international lawyers with banking experience. At this turning point, the Aga Khan decided to consult Lloyds Bank, whose branch managers in India, in Paris, Nice, Le Touquet and Geneva, all conveniently near the social centres in which he moved, had often advised him on matters of investment and connected legal problems.

The Lloyds official dealing with his account in London since the end of the war was the young French-born head of the Legal Department, André Ardoin, who had graduated from Paris University in Law and Economics before coming to England where he continued his studies and joined the Bank at the age of twenty-five. Maître Ardoin was the obvious choice when the elevated client wanted to discuss certain financial matters and asked for a bank official to visit him at the Hôtel Royal at the French resort of Evian, where he was staying with the Begum.

Ardoin flew to Geneva, where a car was waiting to take him to Evian: 'The meeting was informal,' he said. The Aga Khan told him: 'I want to make a Will' and proceeded to explain his intricate position. Discussing a problem rooted in oriental history and complicated by religious law, he was yet fully alive to western financial concepts, full of ideas which, in the context of his Middle and Far



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Eastern preoccupations, could only be described as revolutionary: 'He was vital, direct and to the point,' Ardoin said. 'He asked questions, listened to the answers, asked more questions; once he had mastered the problem, he devised new techniques—he was an innovator!'

Some of the answers he sought Ardoin found in a chapter of 'Mohammedan Law' entitled 'Succession and Status' which related a legatee's creed—in this instance, the Shia Muslim faith—to his personal position in the community. Among Ismailis no such question had arisen since the Aga Khan's own accession to the *gadi* in 1885 when conditions were vastly different. That the young man from Lloyds Bank had come so well prepared to discuss these important matters impressed the Aga Khan: 'He was the kind of man who liked a face and trusted a man whom he liked,' Maître Ardoin said modestly. He was also a good judge of ability and character.

The difficulties of preparing the Will of a man with world-wide and peculiar functions proved considerable. The Aga Khan was extremely secretive: 'It was an oriental atmosphere and he had secret contacts here, there, everywhere,' Ardoin said. But as their meetings continued he put his trust in his young legal adviser and often it was a matter of 'just between you and me'. Ardoin maintained liaison between the client and the Bank, whose management gave him a free hand although legal experts were often consulted. He drafted a provisional document which became the basis for further discussions. They had not gone on for long when the Aga Khan asked Maître Ardoin to give up the job at the Bank and take charge of his affairs—Ardoin agreed and their association lasted, in a matter of speaking, beyond the Aga Khan's death. Ardoin not only prepared the Will but was also concerned with the execution of its complicated provisions when the Aga Khan died.

For the old Aga Khan who was putting his house in order, matters of property and Wills immediately raised the question of domicile and he wished sometimes that he had a territory to call his own. Not that he saw himself as a latter-day Fatimid or ruler over a big province like his grandfather, the first Aga Khan. What inspired the idea, which had fleetingly cropped up before the war, was his anxiety to safeguard the status of the Ismaili community and its property which was in his name. Might not the break-up of India

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yield a spot which could be allocated to him as an administrative centre, a principality, a Vatican-like Ismaili state, small, neutral and inoffensive ?

Had the Aga Khan been younger he would have pursued the project more vigorously because it would have considerably simplified the matter of death duties. European countries made no provisions in the tax law for the peculiarities of Muslim conditions and the question arose whether death duties should be paid on *jamatkhanas*, hospitals, schools. However valuable the land, who would buy a hospital in Nairobi, who would purchase a mosque ? 'The difficulty was that the problem had no precedent,' Ardoin said. 'With regard to all these public places for the use of the community, the Aga Khan was not a trustee, he was the owner.'

A formula had to be found which was in keeping with his functions but the Aga Khan did not want change. The solution was to divide his property, some of which was personal, some of which was held by virtue of his position as Imam : 'A line had to be drawn between his personal and his vocational income. It was important that he should be able to dispose of his personal assets as he wished.'

The Aga Khan decided to take up legal residence in Switzerland and gave instructions to look for a suitable house for him in the neighbourhood of Lake Geneva : 'He wanted a small house,' Ardoin said, 'he always wanted small places . . . four or five rooms.' Sometimes his advisers had to remind him that a man of his wealth and position had to keep up a certain standard. Although he owned Yarovda Palace in Poona and Honeymoon Lodge in Karachi, whenever he visited India he stayed with the Governors or in hotels. By the same token, he could never understand why his son wanted so many residences : 'Don't buy all these properties!' he used to tell Aly who, at one time, maintained thirteen homes.

There is, incidentally, one territory which is an Ismaili state in all but name—Hunza, beautiful land of dark ravines, deep canyons and snowy peaks (many are 23,000 feet or more above sea level) alongside the Pamirs, known as 'the roof of the world'. It is ruled by the Mir of Hunza, Mohammed Jamal Khan, a hereditary chief and loyal Ismaili who acknowledges the Aga Khan as his spiritual leader as do most of the country's thirty thousand inhabitants.

Romantically remote and sometimes inaccessible when melting



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snow turns rivers into wild torrents, Hunza—model for James Hilton's Shangri-La—is popular with adventurous tourists who receive a friendly welcome from the fair, tall people with curly hair who love music, chant war songs, strum mandolines and beat kettle-drums to produce effects not unlike some western beat groups. They make first-class soldiers and the Mir, following an old military tradition, is a major-general in the Pakistan army, while his nephew is commander-in-chief of Pakistan's paratroops. The Mir and his Rani, eminent followers of the Aga Khan, live in an imposing castle several storeys high, built of sun-dried bricks and massive timber, which commands a magnificent view and has been a stronghold for centuries.

The financial complications which the division of the sub-continent created for the Aga Khan and his community did not dampen his joy in the emergence of independent Pakistan: 'Now Islam rises once again!' he exclaimed and described the new state as 'a mighty infant, the greatest child of Islam'. He was full of praise for Mohammed Ali Jinnah, his erstwhile adversary, now Pakistan's first Governor-General. When he visited independent Pakistan for the first time he was generously honoured. The new ministers sought his views and he was consulted by the rulers of Kalat and Hunza. As a token of his confidence in the future the Aga Khan decided to make major investments in Pakistan.

One shadow over the triumph of Pakistan's independence was the death of Mohammed Ali Jinnah in 1948. The suggestion to build the simple, dignified marble mausoleum where he lies buried and which remains a landmark in Karachi came from the Aga Khan, who also selected the *ayats* (verses) of the Koran engraved on the tomb. He initiated the establishment of a new mosque and of an Islamic research institute as a fitting memorial for the founder of the country.



CHAPTER XI

ALY was back in his element. Reluctant as he had been to leave the army, he found civilian life not lacking in adventure. He even managed to invest his visits to the Ismaili community with excitement. As his green and red aircraft swooped down on Salamiya airport, some distance from the city, crowds of loyal followers cheered themselves hoarse, hailing him more like a conquering hero than a religious leader. Switching from aircraft to motor-car, he travelled along unmaneagable roads into the interior of Syria until he and his party had to take to horses and mules to reach the remoter settlements. The farther he went, the more ecstatic his welcome, followers prostrating themselves to kiss the seam of his Arabic burnous. His mission completed, he looked in at Beirut and Cairo before returning to the South of France.

The racing season was at hand and most of his time was taken up with consultations with Frank Butters, Madame Vuillier and Robert Muller. One reminder of these days is a painting of a horse carrying Aly's green and red colours past the winning post which hangs in Muller's office at Lassy, the Aga Khan's stud farm near Chantilly.

'It's Avenger,' Monsieur Muller said. Aly first heard of the horse in 1947 and asked Muller and Madame Vuillier to look him over. They inspected the horse and worked out the pedigree: 'For a maiden which had never won, it was very expensive,' Muller recalled. It did not seem in a very good condition either. Aly ought to see for himself, they suggested. The result was a remarkable encounter. Avenger put his head on Aly's shoulder: 'Look! He wants me! He's mine!' Aly exclaimed and told Madame Vuillier to buy the horse. Six weeks later, watching Avenger win the Grand Prix at



Longchamps, Aly was so exuberant that he squashed Madame Vuillier's hat in his excitement.

Soon after Migoli came second in the first English post-war Derby, the Aga Khan suffered a relapse and Aly was left in sole charge of their racing interests. Although constantly on the move between Newmarket and Deauville, the Curragh and Paris, London and the Riviera, he readily accepted an invitation from Elsa Maxwell, America's legendary social impresario, who was gathering the big names of the Côte d'Azur for a party at the Palm Beach Casino in Cannes. Everybody seemed to be there but the evening held no special attraction for Aly until his alert eye was riveted by a truly grand entrance: 'Good Heavens—what a beautiful woman!' It was Rita Hayworth who, it turned out, had come to the party only after much persuasion and after hurriedly buying an evening gown because she had come to France without any of her own.

Seeing and meeting her changed a great deal for Aly. They spent the evening together, danced and talked and, when the party drifted towards the baccarat tables, went off to the more congenial surroundings of Aly's favourite night-club where they stayed until the early hours.

In the South of France, news of such an encounter spreads faster than the forest fires. Before anything had happened, the gossips were already talking of the great new romance between Aly and Rita. They were right but premature. Rita was not really in the mood for romance but Aly, with the instinct of an *homme à femme*, had caught her at the moment at which many women are most susceptible to a new man's charms.

Though he had seen her name in lights and some of her films, Aly did not know much about her background. That evening Rita told him the story of her life. Working backwards, as it were, from the unenviable situation in which she found herself, she said her husband, America's one-time infant prodigy Orson Welles, writer, actor, director, intellectual, universal genius, was due to arrive in Cannes within a day or so. Their marriage was in trouble but she wanted to make one more attempt to mend it for the sake of their three-year-old daughter Rebecca. They had been married for four years during which time Orson had tried to interest her in the things that occupied his lofty mind and she had worked her way through



volumes of history and philosophy but, as she later put it, 'it is difficult to live with a genius'. It was no secret that they were known in Hollywood as 'The Beauty and the Brain'.

She had tried hard to live up to his standards but her show business background was probably against her although she was not ashamed of it, and had no reason to be. Her grandfather, Antonio Consino, was a good old troupier and her father Eduardo a superb practitioner of Spanish classical dancing; her mother had also been in the theatre. Born in New York, christened Margarita, she had come up the hard way, dancing with her father, graduating to small films in Hollywood. She had been married once before, to Eddie Judson, a middle-aged, imaginative American motor-car salesman who literally remade her, shortening her first name to Rita and changing her surname to an adaptation of her mother's maiden name which was Haworth.

Judson made her dye her black hair red, take lessons in voice production and deportment. She attracted the attention of Harry Cohn, President of Columbia Pictures, who could recognise a 'hot property' when he saw one and carried on where Judson left off. A fashion expert was called in to advise her on clothes, a professional publicity man spread the gospel of her remarkable vital statistics—height 5'6", weight 120 lb, bust 36", waist 26", hips 35", thighs 19", eyes brown, hair Titian. These were the ingredients of Hollywood's new 'Love Goddess', measures of predictable success. Unlike other actresses on the way up, Rita was pliable, willingly accepted advice and soon reached the top. She became Fred Astaire's leading lady and earned over six thousand dollars a week. Her marriage to Eddie broke up and Orson came into her life. But she did not find happiness with him either. To appear in one of his films she even cut her long hair, which was a sacrifice, but she and Orson did not work well together and drifted apart. She spent a year in Europe, largely to let her hair grow again.

Rita's reunion with her husband was not a success. Twenty-four hours later Orson Welles was gone. She felt miserable and was not even cheered by Aly's flowers, although they filled her apartment. At Cap d'Antibes, that week, she was introduced to the Shah of Persia, who asked her to lunch at Eden Rock, the Hôtel du Cap's elegant promontory. She accepted and an American magazine photo-



grapher who got wind of the assignation lay in wait to capture the thrilling rendezvous with his camera. The photographer—and the Shah—waited in vain. The table was laid, the champagne was on ice but Rita did not keep the appointment. Instead, she went to the Château de l'Horizon and joined Aly Khan. They stayed together for most of their time in the South of France. Gordon Young, who has chronicled the Aly-Rita romance in great detail, quoted her as saying to a mutual friend: 'Aly has asked me if I would marry him when he is free. We talked a great deal about his family, especially about his wife and sons.'

Even in the throes of a big new romance, Aly could not banish the thought of his horses from his mind for long. As much as his father, who was recuperating at Yakimour, he was determined to make the 1948 Derby their own, but they agreed that their entry, Noor, a progeny of Nearco, although a product of their own stud and trained by Frank Butters, did not stand a very sound chance. They saw a glimmer of hope in a horse appropriately called My Love, which belonged to the French millionaire, Monsieur Léon Volterra, a showman with a considerable flair for racing. My Love had done nothing really outstanding but was a half-brother of Pearl Diver, winner of the last year's English Derby with a pedigree of speed and stamina which coincided perfectly with the Aga Khan's cherished ideas on breeding.

Convinced that the horse could emulate his half-brother's feat, the Aga and Aly decided to make Monsieur Volterra an offer for My Love but the shrewd French owner would go no further than sell them a half share. Anxious to win his fourth Derby at almost any cost, the Aga Khan agreed and the deal was struck in the nick of time. The ailing Aga was so confident that he was on the threshold of another triumph for his colours, the Begum could not stop him making the arduous trip to England. He tipped My Love to the porters at Victoria Station when he and the Begum arrived in the Blue Train.

On Derby Day, Baroda's My Babu, winner of the Two Thousand Guineas, was favourite at four to one and Monsieur Volterra's Royal Drake was also much fancied but My Love soon attracted support from women who liked its name and from punters who always put their money on the Aga Khan's horses. A crisp telegram—'My



Love to all'—preceded the arrival of Rae Johnstone, the Australian jockey who was engaged to ride him and shared the new owner's confidence in the colt's ability.

Johnston got his powerful mount well away at the start and the Aga Khan who watched the race with Aly by his side was thrilled to see Noor also moving very smoothly. My Love was catching up fast with Royal Drake and passed him in the last furlong to win by a length and a half. Noor came third, relegating My Babu to fourth place. The King congratulated the Aga Khan—neither had backed the winner. Monsieur Volterra was disappointed about Royal Drake's failure and none too pleased with himself for having agreed to let My Love run under the Aga Khan's colours. His share of the prize money was £6,492. The Derby win brought the Aga Khan's wins in stake money for the season to over £46,000 but, to quote Stanley Jackson, 'the winning of his fourth Derby was the sweetest victory of all'.

My Love was only just past the winning post when Aly was on his way back to the South of France and his love. He was wooing Rita more ardently than any woman before her—and not meeting much resistance. She fell in with his hectic mode of life, enjoying the sense of freedom which the use of a private aircraft engenders. One day the Avenger took them to Paris, the next they flew to Rome or Madrid. In Madrid their romance captured the imagination of the *afficionados*. At a bull fight they went to see, the crowd chanted 'Aly' and 'Rita' instead of the names of their favourite *matadors*. Reporters discovered the glamorous couple, who fled to Biarritz with the press in hot pursuit before escaping to Cannes and the comparative privacy of the Château de l'Horizon.

Contract negotiations demanded Rita's presence in Hollywood but Aly could not bear to be separated from her for long and followed her to the United States. Still, characteristically, on his way to California, he stopped over at Saratoga for the yearling sales and did a deal for 200,000 dollars. Then he moved into a rented bungalow in Beverley Hills opposite Rita's house. They spent hours discussing their problem but the Press would not give them time to make up their minds whether they were ready for marriage. Aly countered persistent questions with the conventional 'Miss Hayworth and I are just good friends' but could not resist adding, 'There exists a



wonderful and healthy relationship between us.' The pressure was beginning to tell and they decided to make another run for it, went to Mexico and ended up in Havana.

Soon after their arrival, Rita's lawyers signalled that her divorce from Orson Welles had come through. She also received frantic calls from her studio which was anxious to exploit the publicity and start on a new Rita Hayworth film forthwith. When she did not respond, she was threatened with suspension, which put her 300,000 dollars a year income in jeopardy. For her it was more important to be with Aly but after a fortnight he grew impatient and seemed anxious to return to Europe.

While Aly was constantly in the news, the Aga was trying to get away from it all. He went on safari in East Africa with the Begum and Sadruddin who was too young to be a problem to his father. Their comfortable expedition to the Serengete National Park started at Marseilles where a chartered 45-ton flying boat (with some exquisite provisions in special refrigerators) waited to take them to Mombasa. Africa's finest hunters guided the party which struck camp in the bush. The big marquees with electric light, with the Aga's own porcelain bath, easy chairs and tables, fine linen, glass and silver became an oasis of western civilization. Fresh supplies were flown in daily over a distance of two hundred miles but the Aga's precarious health deteriorated and by the end of the six-week safari he caught a chill which forced him to cancel visits to his communities. He was flown back to Europe and arrived at Yakimour just when the publicity about Aly and Rita was at a new pitch.

The celebrated couple decided to speed their departure from America. Aly booked passages for himself and Rita in the liner *Britannic* which was due to sail for Cobh, Co. Cork, Ireland. To avoid the Press, Rita and little Rebecca were smuggled aboard via the crew's gang plank and made their way to their stateroom through the galley. The voyage was peaceful until the *Britannic* reached Cork harbour where reporters were waiting to board her. They cornered Aly who denied that he planned to marry. Rita said she was 'spending Christmas with some friends over here'.

They kept apart on the tender which took them ashore, drove off in separate cars one of which blocked the road against their pursuers while they went on to Gilltown in the other. Though they were



quickly traced to Aly's stud farm, they kept up the pretence throughout their stay even when inveterate observers discovered them in a Dublin cinema where they saw one of Rita's earlier films and on other occasions when they took little Rebecca for a stroll. From Gilltown they flew to London, spent the night at the Ritz and the following day went to Paris to Aly's house in the Bois de Boulogne.

Dining at the Tour d'Argent restaurant overlooking the Seine, they found themselves two tables away from Orson Welles, one of the embarrassments their affair was constantly causing. Thoughtlessly, Aly was about to give the social hyenas new cause for chatter. He was on his way to Switzerland to see Karim and Amyn who were due to spend part of their winter holidays with him. Their mother collected them from school in Gstaad at the end of term and booked into the Palace Hotel to await Aly's arrival.

They had been in touch about divorce proceedings and matters concerning the boys but Joan expected him to come alone. When he arrived with Rita, they were immediately caught in the glare of publicity. It was suggested that Aly had brought her deliberately to stage a confrontation with Joan. Puritanical women's organisations in the United States launched a violent campaign against Rita threatening to boycott her films if she continued her illicit association with Aly. Aly countered that he and his wife had been living apart for three years and that divorce proceedings were pending: 'As soon as they are finished,' he added, giving the first direct indication of his plans, 'Rita and I will stabilise our situation which has given occasion for unfortunate comments in the Press.'

Six weeks later, in February, 1949, Joan's divorce action was filed in Paris. As grounds she gave 'serious insults' and 'incompatibility'. When her petition was granted, Aly was given custody of the two boys—with a Muslim father and future Imam of the Ismailis involved any other arrangement was unthinkable. Karim and Amyn admired their father who was staying with them in Gstaad—no sons could wish for a more dashing, sporting, comradely and indulgent parent. Though they were well-mannered and polite, they did not take as kindly to their future step-mother. Rita was unable to get on terms with two teenagers who would naturally harbour resentment against the woman who replaced their mother in their father's affections.



Otherwise they spent an enjoyable holiday ski-ing, tobogganning, romping with their father in the snow. Karim, particularly, loved winter sports. At the age of twelve, he was already a practised skier and winning prizes in school races and junior competitions. He started playing ice hockey, reaching a high standard for his age. For Aly the holiday ended with a tragic accident when he suffered a complicated fracture of his leg. But by the time they left Gstaad, the sky was clearing for him and Rita. They went to Cannes to see the Aga Khan who later said that he advised them to marry as quickly as possible. In the face of the newspapers' running commentaries about his son he kept a stiff upper lip. Asked by a British reporter what he thought of the impending marriage of two divorcees, he answered curtly: 'There are 150,000 divorces in Britain every year. Why criticise my son?'

Even before the divorce became final Aly fixed the date of his wedding provisionally for May 27. The divorce papers came through at the end of April. He flew Rita to Paris and took her to the salon of Jacques Fath to choose a wedding dress. When news of their impending arrival got round, the staff was thrilled. Bettina, one of Jacques Fath's top models, recalled how she and the other mannequins watched the famous couple through a chink in the door. During the parade, Rita appeared indifferent and sat there with, what Bettina described as, 'that look of nonchalance so often seen on much-admired women', but Aly was talking and laughing. When it was Bettina's turn, her eye caught Aly's—he seemed warm and sympathetic. She was showing a bridal gown and a famous American photographer, the late Robert Capa, who happened to be in the salon, snapped her as she passed in front of the Prince. It was a prophetic photograph but for the time being Bettina did not give Aly another thought.

She and two other Jacques Fath models were asked to go to the rue de Prony the following Sunday to show Rita some more dresses. Cutting into their rest day, it was an inconvenient assignment but at least Rita chose one of the dresses Bettina showed: 'I found Aly most likable,' Bettina said when I talked to her about the occasion years later, 'but I had no premonition, and would have been most astonished if anyone had suggested that I would share Aly's life with him one day.'



Aly would have been no less surprised at such a suggestion. He was completely wrapped up in his wedding plans. To avoid another burst of publicity which was bound to displease his father, he asked the Prefect of the Alpes Maritime Department to permit the civil ceremony to take place in the privacy of his château but was turned down because French law demands that all weddings must be conducted publicly at a Mairie. Reluctantly he settled for the town hall of Vallauris the local village in the hills, where Picasso made his pottery.

Early on May 27, a hundred photographers and as many reporters were lying in wait for Aly and Rita and congregating outside Vallauris Town Hall. As the morning wore on they were joined by local people and tourists who blocked the way to invited guests. The crowd was over a thousand strong when Aly arrived in a sports car driven by his brother Sadruddin. By Aly's side upstairs was his best man, General Catroux, under whom he served in the war. Mayor Derignon conducted the ceremony with as much decorum as was possible in the crowded hall.

Back at the château the band by the swimming pool greeted them with Aly's old favourite, 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes', to which the violins on the roof replied with 'La Vie en Rose'. A flower arrangement of white carnations in the shape of the letter 'M' (for Margarita) floated in the swimming pool which had been sweetened with the scent of gallons of eau de cologne. Yet the worry about his father's obvious disapproval of the ballyhoo all but spoilt the day for Aly. Rita, surrounded by her husband's friends among whom she was a stranger, was not at her best either. She went through the rest of the day in a haze and confessed that she was nervous throughout—it was worse than facing the film cameras.

That Aly gauged his father's reactions correctly emerged from the Aga Khan's comment on the Vallauris wedding: 'This was a fantastic, semi-royal, semi-Hollywood affair,' he growled in his autobiography. 'My wife and I played our part, much as we disapproved of the atmosphere with which it was surrounded.' Compared with the tumultuous civil wedding, the Muslim ceremony conducted at the château two days later by two mullahs from the Paris Mosque and attended by Ismaili nobles from many parts of the world, was a solemn, dignified affair.



The tense days of Cannes were followed by a relaxing trip to England for the racing season. In addition to the big diamond ring and the sports car which were Aly's presents to his wife, he gave her a racehorse, Skylarking, which was doing extremely well. The Aga and the Begum joined them in England and went with them to the Derby although their entries had little chance. The Aga had not been back in Cannes for long when he received the news that Frank Butters had been run over by a lorry while riding a bicycle in Newmarket and suffered severe injuries. Leading specialists whom he sent to his old trainer's bedside reported that Butters would never recover sufficiently to resume his work.

It was, among other things, to discuss the tragedy with Aly that the Aga Khan and the Begum decided to fly to Deauville. With chauffeur and maid they were leaving Yakimour for the airport when their car was pushed off the road by a black Citroen. Three men jumped out, threatened the Aga Khan with tommy guns, and brusquely asked the Begum to hand over her jewel case. They knew what they were doing—the jewels in the case included a 25-carat diamond ring worth 125,000 dollars and a bracelet worth 200,000 dollars. The total value of their haul was three-quarters of a million dollars.

As the bandits turned to leave, the Aga reminded them that they had not taken his wallet which contained 600 dollars and handed it to them. One of them said: 'Soyez braves et laissez nous partir!' (Be good sports and let us get away.) They did get away. There were rumours that the robbery was the work of American gunmen but a French policeman said in a fit of injured national pride: 'There were no foreigners on this job, no Americans, no Italians, no nothing. This was a job conceived, planned and executed entirely by Frenchmen.' The jewellery was insured by Lloyds of London.

The problem created by the Butters tragedy remained. The Aga and Aly were forced to look for a new trainer and approached Marcus Marsh for whose services two other leading owners, Lord Derby and Marcel Boussac, were already competing. Marsh was undecided. The Aga Khan's two-year-olds were well known, he reasoned, and were expected to do well; if they did, the owner would get the credit, if they did not, the new trainer might well be blamed. He sought advice from the Senior Steward of the Jockey



Club who told him: 'The Aga is, after all, the top owner in Europe—if not the world—and if you didn't accept his offer, I am sure you would come to regret it.' Marsh decided to talk to the Aga Khan and flew to see him at Yakimour. He was most courteously received.

How frail the Aga looked, he thought, but when they discussed terms and he asked for a five-year contract, the old gentleman shook his head: 'No,' he said, 'three.' Suddenly, Marsh observed, he did not look frail at all. His eyes were hidden behind dark glasses but the stubborn cast of his lips and chin was 'reminiscent of a good old-fashioned Irish horse dealer'. Marsh concluded that it was no use arguing, and accepted. On his way back he went to see Aly at his house in the Bois. Alone, except for Emrys Williams, Aly was in his usual leisure wear of cavalry twill trousers and black polo neck sweater. He told Marsh about the race he had ridden in St Cloud when he came last but one. They discussed classic hopes for 1950, particularly Palestine for the Two Thousand Guineas. The outcome of the trip was that Marsh bought a new establishment, Fitzroy House, and took thirty-five of the Aga Khan's horses.

Leaving Aly to complete the arrangements, the Aga Khan escaped the European winter to Pakistan where his community was making great strides. One of the leading Ismailis who looked after him was Captain Amirali Currim Ebrahim who held a commission in the British army during the war ('Our Prince Aly Khan was an officer and desired our people to join'), and following a family tradition, looked after the Aga Khan's estates in Pakistan, and still acts as honorary estate agent to Karim Aga Khan. His brother Zulfikarali Valiani, an eminent lawyer, was in attendance when the Aga wanted to show the Begum the crocodiles in the hot sulphur springs some twenty miles from Karachi. He arranged the excursion and joined the Aga Khan and the Begum on their drive. When their car stopped at a crossing on the outskirts of the city, they were approached by a beggar:

'Give him a hundred rupees,' the Aga Khan told Valiani. Having no cash on him Valiani explained to the beggar that he would come back with the money a little later but the beggar was doubtful and protested tearfully: 'Promise him two hundred rupees,' the Aga Khan commanded and, turning to the beggar, spoke to him in Urdu: 'Don't worry! This man will be back in an hour and give you three hundred rupees!' Valiani arranged for the man to get the money



quickly: 'His Highness,' he said to me good-humouredly, 'might easily have raised the stakes to one thousand rupees.' The Aga was extremely generous, and the community was generous to him. In the course of his visits rich followers presented him with big amounts well in excess of their payments in *zakat* and *khums* but almost invariably the donations were devoted to community projects.

On his return trip he stopped over in Tehran to see the young Shah who conferred the style of a royal Prince of Persia on the descendant of the previous dynasty. It entitled the Aga Khan to the address 'Royal Highness' which also applied to Prince Aly and, eventually, to Prince Karim who is 'His Highness' in Europe but 'His Royal Highness' east of Suez. The Aga Khan's Persian nationality was confirmed enabling him (and his descendants) to hold a Persian as well as a British passport.

In Europe a new grandchild was awaiting him, a half-sister for Karim and Amyn. Giving the lie to the gossips who had predicted a much earlier birth, Rita's baby girl was born on December 28 at the Montchoisi Clinic in Lausanne. Aly told reporters that his wife had had a difficult time. The baby weighed five and a half pounds and would be called Yasmin, Arabic for jasmine.

Yasmin's first few months were spent in Gstaad where Aly took a cottage and gathered the family around him. Karim and Amyn were once more enjoying winter sports with father until he was laid low by another ski-ing accident. Although his leg was broken in three places, his spirits were as high as ever. Wheelchair or no, he flew to Newmarket to see Palestine run—and win the Two Thousand Guineas.

Marcus Marsh had been placing bets for him: 'Have you won anything for me?' he asked, and Marcus said: 'Yes, over £2,000.' According to Marsh, Aly lost that much in the next few days but in racing finance these were not big amounts. Palestine won £12,982 in stake money and, when the colt defeated American-bred Prince Simon, American offers for him poured in, among them one for £158,000. The Aga Khan declined them all and sent Palestine to stud at Giltown. His services as a stallion were syndicated at £120,000, divided into forty shares of £3,000 each. Almost in passing, Aly bought Wilfred Harvey's Sandwich stud of some sixty mares, stallions and foals, concluding the deal within twenty-four



hours and signing the documents as he was leaving the London Ritz for Paris.

Whether in London, Paris, or Giltown, Rita felt as ill at ease among Aly's racing associates as among his socialite friends. Accustomed to top star billing, she did not enjoy playing second fiddle to her famous husband who preferred her to be known as 'Princess Aly Khan' rather than as Rita Hayworth. He did not like the name Rita and called her Margarita. He would not deny her any wish—her dress allowance was £4,000 a year—but there was no disguising the fact that his style of life did not suit her.

Around that time he announced that he was giving his house in the rue de Prony to the community as a European centre for Ismaili students (a house in the Kensington district of London was acquired for England's Ismailis). To replace the rue de Prony he took a town house in Paris in the Boulevard Maurice Barrès which was always filled with his friends but was never home to Rita. He was still the talk of the town, any town, and the latest crop of rumours had it that he was short of cash and had been spending too much on his houses, his aircraft, his yacht, his gambling, on unsuccessful horse deals or diamond necklaces for dancing girls.

These were the kind of rumours which attach themselves to many sons whose rich fathers are still alive and control the purse strings. They were fed with new conjectures whenever Aly sold some of his paintings but the gossips never took into account the value of his property and his share in the racing establishment which was still expanding. He certainly had enough funds at his disposal to buy another big stud farm, 'Haras de Lassy', not far from Chantilly. Buying and selling properties, buying and selling horses, winning and losing while constantly on the move, Aly's approach was casual and he tended to be late settling some of his accounts. His creditors, reluctant to press such an important customer, sometimes grumbled but did not send reminders. If Aly was occasionally short of the odd £10,000 he was certainly not broke.

A tour of Africa was next on the agenda and Rita tagged along dutifully but without great enthusiasm. It went off to a poor start. At Cairo, she thought Aly was spending too much time playing bridge while King Farouk paid court to her with embarrassing persistence. When the King's minions brought her a 'royal com-



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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Sir Eboo Pirbhai, Princes Aly Khan and Sadruddin Khan at the Jubilee celebrations in East Africa, 1946.
(Frischauer)



Aga Khan III in 1924.
(Radio Times Hulton Picture Library)

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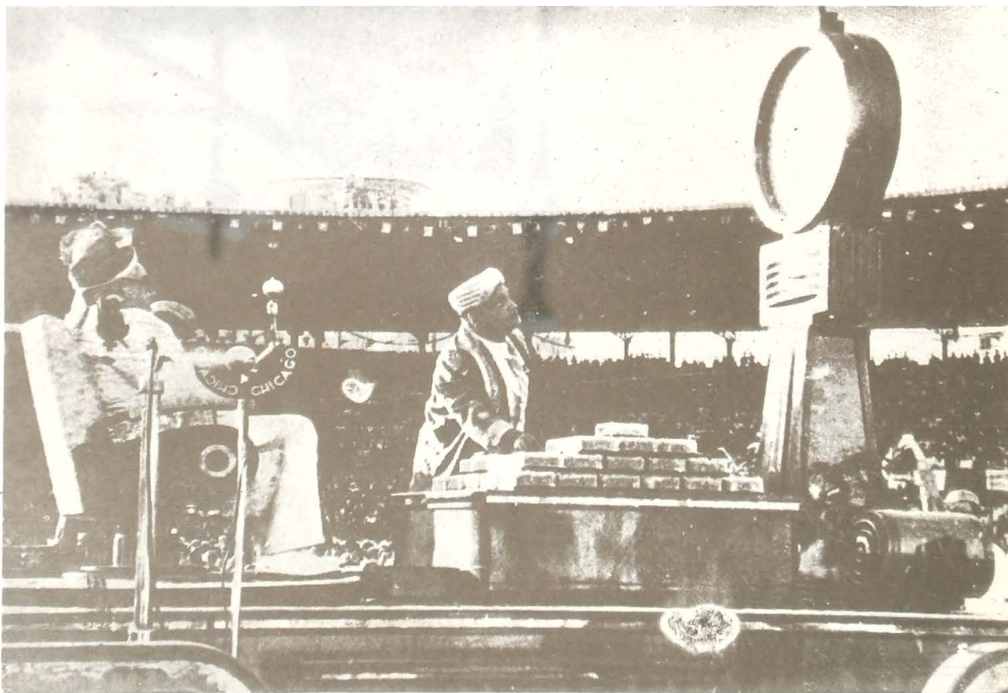


1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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Sadruddin Khan, son of Princess Andrée, and Nina Dyer at their marriage ceremony in 1957. Aly Khan is in the background. *(Paul Popper)*



Aga Khan III is weighed in diamonds in Bombay, 1946.

(Keystone)

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mand' to present herself at his palace, she and Aly left Cairo hurriedly for East Africa. Rita was not cut out for the role of an Ismaili princess and found the community etiquette unnerving. By contrast, Aly revelled in his duties, addressed his followers, attended conferences with the leaders, covering a lot of ground.

When Europeans asked the couple to parties, Rita was anxious to accept but Aly was far too busy with the community. 'That's what we are here for,' he would say. Regal as she was on the screen, Rita did not cut a good figure at gatherings of Ismaili ladies with whom she had so little in common. Conversely, when she wanted to go sea bathing at Mombasa, community leaders hinted that an Ismaili princess ought not to show her figure in public.

A short while earlier, Aly had asked Columbia to stop issuing pin-up pictures of Rita. Now stories emanating from Hollywood suggested that she was about to return and resume her career in films. They were variously confirmed by Aly—perhaps fathered by a secret wish—and denied by her. Husband and wife were now completely out of tune with each other and the longer they travelled together the farther they drifted apart. She refused to join him on safari and, while he was hunting, left East Africa rather abruptly for the South of France to join—or rather collect—Rebecca and Yasmin at the Château de l'Horizon.

Aly went on with his tour—the visit of the Imam's son being a carefully arranged official affair, he could hardly do otherwise. A little later he said that he had no idea his wife intended to leave him but her sudden departure obviously marked the final break. At the end of his tour, he returned to the South of France only just in time to see her taking off with the children for Paris and Le Havre en route to the United States. Whether he was upset or relieved is difficult to say. The Aga Khan who was on his way back from another Far Eastern trip and missed seeing his granddaughter on whom he had not set eyes since her birth, was angry with Rita: 'She could surely have delayed her departure,' he complained, 'and let me see the baby.'

Tens of thousands of words have been written about the parting of Aly and Rita but the Aga Khan's terse few words summed up the end of the affair quite adequately: 'I thought Miss Hayworth charming and beautiful but it was not long before I saw, I am afraid, that



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they were not a well-assorted couple.' Aly, warm-hearted and gregarious, was always surrounded by friends while Rita looked upon marriage as a haven of peace and rest from her professional work. In the Aga's view, the collapse of the marriage of two people whose ways of life were thus dramatically opposed was inevitable.

Having decided to end the marriage, Rita was apparently haunted by fear lest the powerful Aga Khan and his son might deprive her of Yasmin, perhaps even kidnap the child: 'Had Miss Hayworth made more inquiries,' the Aga commented, 'she could have found out what in fact are the Ismaili religious laws and the code which governs all my followers and my family in these matters.' Under this code, young children are entrusted to their mothers whatever the circumstances of the divorce: 'Unless we were criminals'—again the Aga Khan—'we could not have contemplated taking the baby Yasmin from her mother.' Muslim boys at the age of seven pass into their father's custody but girls remain with their mother until puberty when they are free to choose. The Aga also rejected the insinuation that he had failed to make provision for his granddaughter's future explaining that, under Islamic law, the child's father was obliged to leave her a share of his estate. Since it was unlikely that Aly would die penniless, the Aga said, there was no urgency about providing for Yasmin. Privately he was heard muttering: 'If Aly could only choose his women as he chooses horses . . . !'

From the Château de l'Horizon, Aly sent a long letter to Rita telling her of his astonishment and sadness that she had left him so suddenly. He had no thought of any other woman or of divorce, he wrote, but explained the conditions of a legal separation: 'If you should ever change your mind,' he ended, 'this separation could not prevent your light returning to my life.'



CHAPTER XII

ALTHOUGH four or five years beyond the Biblical life-span of three score and ten, and indifferent in health, the Aga Khan continued to travel between continents, turning up in Asia, Africa, the Middle East as frequently as in the watering places and racing centres of Europe. Aly was moving about as restlessly—‘restlessly and sometimes recklessly searching for happiness,’ to quote Gordon Young, ‘which for most of the time seems to have eluded him like a shadow.’ But the paths of father and son crossed frequently.

They were together in Cairo early in 1951 when they met Ismaili leaders from Pakistan, India, Burma and East Africa who came to ask the Aga Khan’s permission to weigh him in platinum in 1955, the seventieth anniversary of his accession, and promised to raise a record amount. Though he might well have wondered whether he would live to celebrate the day, the Imam approved their plans because the money would help to finance valuable welfare projects for the community.

An invitation to attend the wedding of the Shah of Persia to the beautiful Soraya Esfandiari took him to Tehran for a second time in as many years. It meant more than a festive occasion. Visiting Persia was going back to his very roots, and made him more conscious than ever of his Iranian background. The Tehran palace the Shah put at his disposal was sumptuous and comfortable. In Mahalat, seat of his ancestors, thousands of Ismailis from all over the country assembled to pay him homage. The women, he noticed with great satisfaction, had given up the *chaddur*, the Persian version of purdah (though in remoter areas through which he passed they still hid their faces).

His next station[¶] was Karachi, the city of his birth. He addressed



the World Muslim Conference breaking a lance for the Arabic language: 'Should not the powerful Muslim state of Pakistan make Arabic its national language?' he asked. 'While Arabic will unite the Muslim world, Urdu will divide and isolate!' He defended Islam against all comers and when the London *Times*, which he sometimes treated as if it were his house organ, spoke of Islam as 'an intolerant religion which teaches the duty of shunning foreign influence', he denounced 'this sweeping generalisation' as untrue and unfair. Did not Islam practise *hilm* which means tolerance, forbearance and forgiveness? As if to show that he meant what he said, he exhorted his fellow Muslims to learn from Europe 'those secrets of power over nature, of scientific, economic and industrial development which have made the West so powerful'.

He backed up his sermon with hard cash for research and scholarships and sponsored a technological institute in Dacca, East Pakistan, modelled on one he had seen in Switzerland. He would modernise the cotton mills and start new industries with the help of European associates, he promised, and at once put up funds for a hundred and fifty huts for homeless refugees to be built on the outskirts of Karachi. He gave permission for Honeymoon Lodge to be used as a convalescent home for ailing Ismailis—the only convalescent home in Pakistan—and started a fund for the maintenance of old mosques: £20,000 he donated towards a new mosque in London turned out to be a very long-term project; by 1970 the mosque had not yet been built.

Presiding over small lunch and dinner parties the Aga Khan, as usual, quizzed his guests about every subject under the sun. In the course of this visit he approved final plans for the Ismaili Pak Insurance Co-operative Bank which opened the following year with a capital of twenty-five lakhs (2,500,000 rupees) admitting only members who were 'Loyal and practising Imami Ismaili followers of His Royal Highness The Prince Aga Khan and His Successors'; it has since sprouted branches in many Ismaili centres. In a family transaction, he transferred the ownership of the Karachi Gymkhana, a big sports and assembly ground, to his son Aly.

The strain of work and travel across the vast sub-continent was beginning to tell. On his way to Calcutta, he suffered a heart attack which brought the tour to a premature end. He was flown back to



the South of France in the care of the Begum and two nurses. To step into the breach, Aly was rushed back from South America where he had been looking for horses. Continuing the programme on behalf of his father, he stamped the tour with his peculiar brand of bonhomie. Instead of grasping the outstretched hand of an Ismaili leader who addressed him humbly as 'Prince', he embraced the man and told him: 'Don't call me Prince, call me Brother!'

Aly insisted on visiting the smallest villages, consumed an incredible amount of ice-cream as he drove from place to place, was completely tireless and content with two hours' sleep a night. In Karachi he inaugurated a housing colony for Ismailis with a capital of forty lakhs (four million rupees) at 15,000 rupees per flat. Although he returned to inspect the work when it was in its early stages he did not live to see the completed 'Prince Aly Khan Colony' which houses some two thousand people in flats with modern bathrooms and kitchens of a much higher standard than their non-Ismaili neighbours enjoy.

Convalescing at Yakimour, the Aga Khan devoted himself to his family, keeping a wary eye on the younger generation. After a spell at Lausanne University, Sadruddin was sent to Harvard to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree (one of his contemporaries was Edward Kennedy)—the plan was for him to go on to the Centre of Middle Eastern Studies. Soon the old gentleman was well enough to discuss the forthcoming racing season with Aly who, incidentally, was seen with the French chanteuse Lise Bourdin, who was helping him to forget Rita Hayworth. One of the decisions the father-and-son racing partnership made was to buy the Italian three-year-old Nuccio for whom they paid £50,000 but the paramount aim which inspired all their scheming and planning was to win the Derby for the fifth time. The horse that carried their hopes for the 1952 Derby Stakes was Tulyar.

Ismaili leaders frequently travelled to the South of France to pay their respects to the Aga Khan. One of them, Zulfikarali Valiani, on his way to the Villa Yakimour, was given a lift by Aly Khan: 'How did you get here?' the Aga Khan asked him when he arrived. When Valiani replied: 'Prince Aly gave me a lift in his car,' the Aga frowned and asked sternly: 'Do you want to end up in hospital?' He would not allow him to return with Aly. Valiani recalls Aly driving from



Karachi to Hyderabad at eighty miles an hour and changing his coat without slowing down. No wonder Aly's friends shared his father's misgivings: 'I will do anything in the world for Aly,' Elsa Maxwell said, 'except get into a car when he is at the wheel.'

Like other Ismailis, Valiani occasionally visited Le Rosay to see how the Imam's grandson was getting on. He was off to Switzerland once more when the Aga Khan told him that he wanted an independent view on how the boy was progressing with his religious and language studies: 'When you see Prince Karim,' he told Valiani, 'try to talk to him in Urdu, so he gets some practice . . .' Karim who was playing football when Valiani arrived, stopped and ran up to his visitor. They had a talk—in Urdu—after which Karim continued his game. Inaugurating the Urdu University in Karachi several years later, Prince Karim recalled 'the burdensome duty of instructing me in Urdu' which fell to his professor at Le Rosay. 'After some time,' he said, 'I was in the fortunate position of being able to appreciate, if not fully understand, the beautiful language.'

Though he did not know it, he was the subject of long discussions between his parents and his grandfather. His time at Le Rosay would come to an end in 1953, and decisions about his future had to take into account the possibility that he might become Imam of the Ismailis sooner or later (in the light of what happened it is likely that his grandfather was thinking in terms of 'sooner' rather than 'later'): 'I was in favour of "K" going to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,' Princess Joan told me. 'He had artistic talent, was a very good draughtsman and drew some excellent pictures,' she said, pointing to the walls of her drawing-room which bear witness to young Karim's efforts as a painter and sculptor. He was equally interested in architecture and science: 'Mathematics was my strong point,' Karim Aga Khan confirmed when we discussed these days; and that is why he started classes in engineering in 1952.

His grandfather seemed to be thinking of a broader educational basis. The old Aga seemed to think highly of the boy. Whenever he was at Villa Barakat in Geneva he sent for Karim and talked to him at great length, subtly introducing him into the deeper meaning of the Ismaili faith and instilling him with the sense of mission which became apparent to all not many years later. Prince Karim himself remembers his grandfather asking questions about his religious



instruction, testing his knowledge: 'He could extract more from a human being in a short conversation than anybody else in a lifetime,' he mused. But there was also something completely inscrutable about his grandfather when it came to important matters: 'Yet, when he took a decision, one did not have to ask him for his thinking process, one felt sure it was taken *en connaissance* of all aspects.' Young Karim found his grandfather jovial but with a joviality that never turned into flippancy. He could be playful and gay and light-hearted, was not at all formal and very rarely *gris*—morose: 'If he had serious matters to discuss he would make it quite clear from the start.'

With the approach of the English Derby, the heart of the grand old man of the turf beat a little higher. He was thinking of Tulyar whom he came to regard as the greatest horse he ever owned although it was difficult to assess the limits of the colt who was never doing more than just enough. Not everybody shared his optimism. Tulyar disappointed Marcus Marsh who did not run him in the Two Thousand Guineas but was converted when the colt proved its worth as a stayer in another race. If only he were not such a lazy horse! While Aly was at Fitzroy helping to exercise the horses, he and Marsh talked a lot about policy; though the best of friends, on racing matters they no longer saw eye to eye but some of the discord was probably due to Derby tension.

There was a heat-wave and the going was hard, which was thought not to suit Tulyar, but after one gallop over a bone-dry patch, Charlie Smirke found no cause for complaint: 'This one will do for me at Epsom,' he told Marsh. Obviously, rain or shine, Tulyar was a very hot tip indeed. A rumour that the colt would be withdrawn because of the hard going was swiftly denied by Aly: 'He will run and he will win.' Marsh felt that he was working for the most powerful and demanding stable in Europe and that his reputation was at stake but the challenge from eight high-class French entries did not shake his or the stable's confidence.

On Derby Day, Tulyar was his sleepy-self and looked small and fragile. He was drawn Number Sixteen and it was up to Charlie Smirke to keep him out of trouble if he could. After a good start, Monarch was taken into the lead by Gordon Richards who was trying to win his first Derby—this was his twenty-eighth attempt. Monarch was followed by Bob Major with Tulyar third, according to



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Marsh 'a perfect position'. Then the two front runners slowed down and were overtaken by Tulyar who, contrary to stable plans, raced ahead. Still, Smirke managed to keep him there. Defeating a powerful challenge from Lester Piggott on Gay Time with a brilliant manoeuvre, Smirke and his mount reached the post half a length in front.

For the Aga Khan's stable, the fifth Derby win was a complete triumph. The stake money of £20,587 was divided among trainer, jockey and stable lads but Aly, as Marsh put it, 'clipped the book-makers for £40,000'. Not much later, when Marsh gathered from a casual conversation with Nesbit Waddington that Aly proposed to move most of his horses to another stable, he tackled the Aga Khan but was told that this was entirely up to Aly. He, the Aga Khan, did not want to lose Marsh's services and would be giving him £50,000 a year to buy yearlings. Marsh was critical of some aspects of the Aga Khan's approach to breeding and racing but felt there were things 'you just could not say to a demi-God'. He was hopeful of keeping Tulyar for another season and sailed from England to spend the winter in South Africa.

Aly travelled to the United States in a glare of publicity to make it up with Rita, whose lawyer, Bartley Crum, announced condescendingly that the Prince had asked for six months' grace to re-woo his client. Laden with toys and packages, Aly arrived in Hollywood where he and Rita were plunged in an emotional situation when Yasmin swallowed some sleeping pills thinking them to be sweets and had to be rushed to hospital. The little girl was soon out of danger.

When Aly returned to Europe Rita followed him and moved into his house in the Boulevard Maurice Barrès. The atmosphere was not conducive to a genuine reconciliation. Reporters and photographers kept up a constant vigil so as not to miss a single move in the intricate game but Aly continued to see his racing cronies and business associates which suggested to Rita that he had no intention of 'reforming'. Leaving him for a second time, she moved to the Hotel Lancaster, off the Champs Elysées, and told reporters: 'I am bored with Aly's friends.' Then she headed for Hollywood—and divorce.

There followed an embarrassing period of legal wrangling about the terms of separation and what the Press called 'Aly-money'.



Rita's lawyer asked Aly to set up a trust fund for three million dollars for Yasmin. Eventually Rita was awarded 40,000 dollars a year for their daughter's upkeep. Protracted arguments also went on about Yasmin's upbringing—Christian or Muslim—and about the child's visits to her father in Europe. Still preoccupied with the absurd notion that she might be kidnapped, Rita's lawyers demanded a bond of 100,000 dollars every time Yasmin left the United States. An allegation that Rita was neglecting both her children, Rebecca and Yasmin, received wide publicity. She finally obtained her divorce on January 27, 1953, after a hearing in a Nevada court lasting seventeen minutes.

Public interest in Aly's matrimonial affairs was only rivalled by curiosity about Tulyar's future: 'Will he be sold for stud?' the Begum was asked: 'Who can tell?' she answered politely, 'we have so many mating problems in this family.' Tulyar's sale, in fact, was imminent. Returning to England early in 1953, Marcus Marsh was spending his last day aboard the liner that had brought him from South Africa when he heard on the six o'clock news that 'the Irish National Stud today purchased last year's Derby winner, Tulyar, for a quarter of a million pounds, a record fee'. He was bitterly disappointed to lose the colt and thought he was at least entitled to a percentage but when he put this to the Aga Khan he received a curt reply: 'I have never given a percentage on sales yet, and I don't intend to start now.'

However aggravating the rebuff, Marsh's personal relations with Aly did not suffer as a result. Aly called him a few weeks later and said he would like to come and spend the weekend with him: 'Good,' Marsh replied, 'we'd love to have you.' It emerged that Aly was bringing a friend who wanted to stay strictly incognito and turned out to be another Hollywood star, the delicately handsome Gene Tierney who had made her name ten years earlier in Otto Preminger's excellent film, *Laura*.

There was good reason for discretion. Freed from matrimonial bonds, Aly was once more fair game—it was not so much what he did but the role he played in the imagination of others. Like cowboys trying to test their strength against the West's deadliest gunslinger, women threw themselves at him and told the newspapers turgid tales about their alleged association. Publicity men tried to



squeeze the last ounce of juicy innuendo from Aly's most casual and fleeting contacts.

Elsa Maxwell's contribution was to confess that she had had no sex in her life but that Aly was one of the two men who attracted her. Zsa-Zsa Gabor talked about the affair she did not have with Aly, and another non-event in his life received a great deal of publicity—his withdrawal from the Mille Miglia motor race in Italy when the Aga Khan asked him not to take part. Young Karim winced whenever the headlines brought the tittle-tattle about his father home to him. It was in these days that he first formed his aversion to publicity and resolved to give the press as little cause for comment about his personal affairs as humanly possible. That he would grow up to hate, not his father, of whom he was fond and proud, but his father's playboy image was a foregone conclusion.

Around this time, one of Aly's friends brought Bettina to the Boulevard Maurice Barrès for drinks but, as so often, the guests arrived before the host. Aly was always late but always apologised so handsomely that he was soon forgiven. He took Bettina out to dinner at the Pré Catalan, his favourite restaurant and met her once more, if briefly, in the South of France. After the Grand Prix de Paris, everybody went to Aly's party, and when he gave another one in Cannes a few weeks later his father was among the guests giving the lie to rumours that they had fallen out. The Aga saw Aly paying court to Gene.

Like Rita Hayworth, Gene had been married but was divorced from her husband, a leading American couturier. Unlike Rita, she found it easy to adapt to Aly's mode of life, and fitted in as easily at Giltown, where she joined him on his early morning rides, as in the casinos of the Côte d'Azur, where she watched him gambling for high stakes. In the passage of time, the gossip and the alarums around Aly and Gene Tierney died down and so did their friendship. Gene suffered a mental breakdown, retired to a quiet life in the United States and received psychiatric treatment before making a triumphant come-back to the screen—in another Preminger film.

With the Aga Khan ailing and ageing, the management of the racing establishment was almost entirely in Aly's hands. One problem he had to solve forthwith was the choice of a successor to Nesbit



Waddington who was due to retire as stud manager at the end of 1953. He had already investigated several possibilities and virtually made up his mind to invite Major Cyril Hall, manager of the National Stud in Ireland, to take on the job. They knew and liked each other. Major Hall was no stranger to the Aga Khan either, and had also met young Karim on some of his summer visits to Giltown. Aly summoned him to the South of France and asked him point blank whether he would be prepared to take over the management of the studs. His terms were generous, the opportunity was tempting. Major Hall's mind was quickly made up.

As soon as the directors of the National Stud released him, he took charge of the Aga Khan's seven Irish stud farms—Giltown, Sheshoon, Ballymannny, Sallymount, Ongar, Williamstown and Eyrefield: 'At that time, the Aga Khan and Prince Aly between them had one hundred and eighty horses,' he said. 'They probably represented a value which, at a guess, would be three million pounds sterling today.'

While Aly looked after the horses, the Aga Khan spent most of his time studying reports from Ismaili centres. Their keynote was progress. Local leaders sought his approval for new projects and, asked for his advice, humble followers turned to the Imam with their personal problems. Dictating his replies, suggesting solutions, stimulating new thinking, he continued to guide the lives of millions. Economic, educational and health matters were his main concern but politics often intruded. While conditions in the Indian sub-continent were reverting to normal, he foresaw great political changes in East Africa.

As Britain's colonies moved towards independence, Ismailis were growing in stature. They would have to play their part in the transformation of their country. He discussed the subject with many of them who came to see him in the South of France or in London, where he continued to frequent the Ritz Hotel. At that time, one leading Ismaili travelled to London for an auspicious occasion which was not altogether untypical. Eboo Pirbhai, member of the Legislative Council of Kenya, visited Buckingham Palace with his family to receive a knighthood from the Queen. The Aga Khan conferred on him the Ismaili title of Count.

Another arrival in London was Karim, who, at the age of seven-



teen, left Le Rosay—not sorry by any means that his schooldays were at an end but sad to leave Gstaad, his beloved Swiss mountains and the winter sports at which he excelled. He was bound to come back again and again: ‘Ski-ing,’ he said to me years later, ‘is the one sport which leaves one no time to worry about one’s obligations or about anything else. It is compulsive concentration.’

Having been accepted for admission by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the strength of his school record and without an entrance examination, he was spending the holiday with his parents, staying with Princess Joan in London before going to join his father at the Château de l’Horizon. Although he and Aryn would be separated for the first time, he would not be without family support in a strange land because his uncle Sadruddin was at Harvard studying Middle Eastern history, a popular figure on the campus and founder of the Harvard Islamic Association, and Patrick Guinness, his mother’s son by her first marriage, was working in the United States.

‘I was happy about the prospect of going to the M.I.T.,’ Prince Karim said, ‘everybody was happy!’ Not everybody, really. When the subject cropped up in conversation with his grandfather at Yakimour, the Aga Khan only said absent-mindedly: ‘Yes, yes, yes.’ But the following week Karim was called to Yakimour again: ‘You are going to Harvard,’ the Aga Khan told him in a friendly but firm tone which brooked no contradiction: ‘I was too young to ask his reasons,’ Prince Karim told me, ‘I did not dare to ask him—and never did.’

The young man did not know—cannot tell—whether his grandfather was already thinking of him as the next Imam. He sat his entrance examination for the Department of Engineering at Harvard, passed it and was admitted for the autumn term of 1953. At a school dance in Gstaad at the end of term, he danced once or twice with the dark-haired, handsome sister of Fernando Casablanca, one of his schoolmates at Le Rosay. Her name was Sylvia and her parents—father Mexican, mother Swiss—lived in Geneva where she and Karim saw each other occasionally. They came together again in the South of France and, young though they were, a romance developed which, in these carefree days, remained unnoticed and unrecorded.

That autumn Karim went to the States but for the next four or



five years, whenever he returned to Europe, he saw Sylvia whose family assumed that they might one day be married. It was a little early to make wedding plans for the Aga Khan's grandson who, like most youngsters of his age, was meeting a great number of girls. At a party in London which was attended by Princess Margaret and attracted a certain amount of attention, he was seen with a pretty débutante, Countess Bunny von Esterhazy, step-daughter of a Hungarian-born racehorse owner who was henceforth always referred to as his girl friend.

None of these social engagements or romantic entanglements in Europe even remotely interfered with his studies. Karim liked the life in Harvard and completely immersed himself in his studies. His interest in mathematics, chemistry and general science never subsided but it was not many months before he began to look to history for answers to questions he was constantly asking himself. Intellectually, he was attracted to Islam, which had played such an important part in his upbringing, and impressed by Harvard's exceptionally strong department on Islam and its excellent orientalists, Sir Hamilton Gibb, Professor Philip K. Hitti and Professor R. N. Frye (who later occupied the Chair of Aga Khan Professor for Iranian Studies, endowed by Prince Sadruddin). They offered a large choice of courses on Islamic matters which were of real significance.

Slowly the idea of switching from engineering to Islamic studies matured in his mind. Was it his grandfather's wish that he should study Islam? Years later, when he had already been Imam for over a decade, Prince Karim was still sensitive on this point: 'I never discussed the switch with my grandfather,' he said. 'It was a personal decision which had nothing to do with either my father or my grandfather.'

It laid the foundation for Prince Karim's astonishing range of religious knowledge and, as important, his sense of proportion on these delicate matters: 'At the university,' he said, 'there were discussions which exposed me to all aspects of Islamic studies. The scope was very wide. I read extensively and acquired an overall view.' Because it was tested by other influences and did not develop in a glasshouse atmosphere of isolated Ismaili doctrine, his faith grew all the stronger.

Obviously, he does not accept the views of every author whose



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religious works he studied. In the light of his Shia Ismaili persuasion, he became critical of many works which interpret the history of Islam in Sunni terms. He has the greatest respect for Professor Hitti, a Christian Arab, whose classes he attended: 'His achievement lies in the compilation of a great many facts and figures which have never been collected before,' he mused. But this does not mean that the young Imam's conclusions coincide with the Professor's on all points or that he accepts Hitti's interpretation in every detail.

'K. Khan of Harvard' was only just beginning to come to terms with the university's approach to the theory of Islam when, as Prince Karim-al-Huseini, he was called upon to undertake an official mission on behalf of his grandfather. Separated from Ismaili contacts by the Atlantic Ocean, he had to acquaint himself with the events leading up to the situation into which he was about to be plunged. It appeared that a campaign of abuse and vilification against the Aga Khan and Aly Khan was unsettling Ismailis in East Africa, where collections for the Platinum Jubilee were under way. At one point it reached such a pitch that Mr Oliver Lyttleton, the British Colonial Secretary, was asked to investigate. Community leaders from Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda travelled to Evian, the French spa, to attend a council over which the Aga Khan presided. They decided that all Ismailis should be asked to sign a pledge of loyalty.

Important voices were raised in defence of the Aga Khan: 'These fanatics and hotheads do not realise that the Aga Khan gives us far more than we give him,' said Mr Ibrahim Nathoo, a prominent Ismaili who was Kenya's Minister of Works. Sir Eboo Pirtbhai assured reporters that the community in Africa was 'completely loyal' and denounced the 'purely mischievous' anonymous attempts to damage the Aga Khan's name. The community itself would take action against the slanderers. In Kenya, mass meetings of Ismailis passed resolutions condemning the 'unknown individuals under fictitious names and bogus organisations' who carried on a subversive campaign against 'the August person of the head of the Ismailia faith, His Highness the Aga Khan, Ismailia religion and Ismaili leaders'.

The family rallied to the Imam's cause. In scorching heat, the Begum went to Mecca, the first European-born woman to make the



exhausting pilgrimage. Clad in the Ihram, the long, white, rough cotton garment of the pilgrims, which makes it impossible to distinguish rich from poor, she worshipped at the shrine of Islam. In Paris, Prince Aly was in discussions with leading Ismailis and Karim and Aryn were despatched to East Africa to tour Ismaili centres with a personal message from the Aga Khan. In Nairobi, Prince Karim addressed a large gathering, bringing home to Ismailis and non-Ismailis how much his grandfather had done for the community. One hundred and four schools in East Africa were maintained by grants from the Aga Khan who wanted as many students as possible to enter the teaching profession.

Returning to Harvard, the Prince quickly settled down again among fellow students who remained happily impervious to the aura of his family. Having switched to Islamic studies in his sophomore year, he roomed at Leverett House dormitory with John Fell Stevenson, son of the ex-Governor of Illinois and Democratic presidential candidate of 1952: 'K. Khan,' Stevenson said, 'was a charming fellow with a cracking wit.' According to his room-mate, he did not go in much for clothes and became known as 'that guy who had only one pair of shoes'. 'During the time I knew him,' said Stevenson, 'he owned two suits but I never saw either of them pressed. He had about two dozen neckties but they were all the same colour.'

The teaching staff regarded him as 'intelligent and serious but rather shy'. Professor Frye said that he had immense capabilities and was a well-rounded student, 'liked by all of us here'. Senior Tutor Richard Gill thought him an awfully nice guy, one of the best fellows at Leverett. Everyone testified to his keen mind but one instructor suggested that he did not work all the time as hard as he could have done. He dropped chemistry after a two-semester struggle but collected an impressive number of top grades and his name appeared regularly on the Dean's list, an index of high scholastic achievement. His room at Leverett House with a wide view of the Charles River reflected his current preoccupations. Gramophone records—his favourite was Tschaikowsky's opera, *Undine*—were stacked side by side with volumes of philosophy and history to which he turned—to quote Stevenson—'with casual concentration'.



Fellow students were impressed by his talent with the bongo drums: 'He'd practise drumming on anything available,' Stevenson chuckled, 'waste baskets, automobile fenders, desk tops. If there was anything to hit, he'd snap his fingers.' Unlike many of his contemporaries, Karim did not run a car, usually walked or hitched a ride with friends, and never failed to get one because he had so many friends. He belonged to several clubs, including the exclusive Delphic, the Signet, whose members must demonstrate intelligence (fellow members: T. S. Eliot and John Rockefeller IV), and the Hasty Pudding. In summer he rowed on the Charles, in winter spent most weekends ski-ing at Stowe, Vermont. Occasionally he went to New York to see a play or have dinner with a girl friend (Jane O'Reilly, pretty daughter of an American millionaire, was one of them) or a relative—his mother came from England to visit him and Amyn soon followed him to Harvard. Uncle Sadruddin's reputation on the campus was that of a gay, flamboyant young man. By contrast, Karim's life was one of comfortable obscurity.

For the Aga Khan, the position was reversed—prominence and discomfort were the order of the day. The Far Eastern Platinum Jubilee celebrations were scheduled for February 1954. So as to be equal to the strain of another long trip and the elaborate weighing ceremony, he submitted himself to a course of C.T. (Cell Therapy) injections by Professor Paul Niehans, the famous 'rejuvenator', whose clinic, La Prairie, was not far from Villa Barakat near Geneva. The treatment was effective and by the time he reached Karachi the Aga Khan's condition had improved. He was received with royal honours as the Governor-General's personal guest and paid homage to by the large and prosperous Ismaili community.

On the day of the ceremony, the specially built stadium was sardine-packed with sixty thousand people and all the roads leading to it were filled with crowds who could not gain admittance. Escorted by his *vazirs* and councillors in scarlet and gold robes and gold turbans—except for the Mir of Hunza, who wore black velvet and gold—the Aga Khan appeared in a ceremonial high-walled black cap, a white tunic and a brown, embroidered robe. Aly wore a black cap, white jodhpurs, boots and spurs. The atmosphere was almost light-hearted. Sitting between the Begum Aga Khan and his own wife, Prime Minister Mohammed Ali recorded the whole ceremony



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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Princess Joan Aly Khan, mother of Prince Karim, Aga Khan, and Prince Ameen. This drawing is her sons' favourite picture of her.
(drawing by Brian)



The Aga Khan, Prince Ameen and Princess Joan Aly Khan at the memorial service for the Aga Khan's grandfather at Woking mosque.
(Keystone)



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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Princess Andrée, Bettina and Yvette Aga Khan leaving Paris after the death of Aly Khan in a car crash in 1960. . (Paul Popper)

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with his 3-D camera, frequently 'shooting back' at the photographers.

After the recitations from the Koran, the Aga Khan rose and raised his hands in prayer before resuming his seat. Listening to the messages from kings and heads of state and to the long address of welcome, he seemed to be tiring. The afternoon sun was blazing down and a servant of the Governor-General's household was holding a sunshade over him. But when the Aga Khan rose to deliver his *irshad* (advice) to his 'spiritual children', the servant remained in his seat and left him unprotected.

At the Aga Khan's urging he got up but still held the shade so awkwardly that it provided no protection.

Watching the incident from below, the Begum's anxious expression reflected her husband's obvious discomfort. The smile disappeared from her lips: 'What a fool,' she said under her breath and motioned vigorously towards the servant. When he took no notice she at last managed to attract the attention of an official who told him to tilt the shade at a proper angle. Before the Begum had time to relax she noticed a young boy in a white shirt making his way to the rostrum. Once more she usurped the duties of a Master of Ceremonies and had the intruder removed.

The Aga Khan started by saying how proud and happy he was to have been born in Karachi which was also the birthplace of the late Qaid-i-Azam, the Father of the Nation. Nostalgically, he mentioned that, shortly before his death, Jinnah had asked him to take charge of Pakistan's diplomatic representation in Europe and America but his health would not allow him to accept the offer: 'It was so bad that not only I myself but all my doctors and family expected me to die long before him.' The speech culminated in an appeal to Ismailis to make their patriotism and loyalty active and practical: 'If every Ismaili living in Pakistan remembers and interprets his citizenship, howsoever humble his contribution may be, with the spirit of courage and devotion, then indeed I am happy to think that after many years of surgical operations and illnesses, I am still alive to give you this fatherly advice.'

The value of the platinum used symbolically in the weighing ceremony was three million rupees: 'This must not be frittered away,' said the Aga Khan. 'It should be the beginning of something like the Investment Trust in Africa to be built up so that by a target



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date, say 1960, you will be able to build up a position by which Ismailis both in East and West Pakistan can be sure of employment.' His aim was a prosperous Pakistan in which Ismailis could fully share in the prosperity, an attitude of enlightened self-interest of which patriotism was a basic ingredient. The principle still guides Ismailis wherever they live.

Will-power alone enabled the Aga Khan to hold out until the end of the ceremony. Once in his suite in Government House, he was near collapse, ran a temperature and was so low that doctors insisted on him taking a complete rest—no work, no worry! The Begum watched over him with great application but not even she could restrain him. He was haunted by the needs and the problems of the community as if determined to safeguard the future while he still had the strength. One evening, when the Begum retired, he heaved himself to his desk and wrote a long personal letter to Amirali Fancy in which he set out his ideas and plans on how to advance the fortunes of his community and raise their standard of living. He was adamant that his followers should be assisted financially but should, at the same time, learn to stand on their own feet. He wanted them to feel proud of themselves: 'I do not believe in giving them charity,' he wrote, 'financial assistance should be given only for the purpose of making them independent.'

'It was 2 a.m. when His Highness's Iranian A.D.C. delivered the letter to me at my house,' Amirali Fancy told me. 'His Highness wants a reply at once,' the A.D.C. said, 'it will have to be done very quickly so that the Begum does not find out he has been working at nights.' Fancy wrote a reply on the spot: 'His Highness's letter remains one of my proudest possessions,' he said.

Itmadi (The Trusted One) Amirali Fancy, *kamadia* and member of the Ismailia Supreme Council for West Pakistan at the time, started the ball rolling with an investigation into economic opportunities for Ismailis: 'I called a meeting of the Council,' he said, 'and we discussed the most favourable areas.' Some leading Ismailis went into textiles, others into the export-import business with less well endowed Ismailis taking up shares in their enterprises: 'I went into steel,' Amirali Fancy said. Like all those who followed the Aga Khan's advice, he did extremely well. His rolling mills are among the biggest in Pakistan.



A project to which the Aga Khan was already heavily committed since the early fifties was the jute industry in East Pakistan. He had a growing stake in the Crescent Jute Mill in which Prince Sadruddin also took up shares. Its value has more than trebled in the intervening years: 'If anyone wanted to buy it today,' Amirali Fancy said, 'he could not get it for less than £8 million.' Then came the People's Jute Mill, set up by the Aga Khan and local Ismailis with the government taking a thirty-three per cent share. The Mill is estimated to be worth another £8 million and the Aga Khan and the community retain a controlling interest.

The project arising from the Jubilee which helped to spread benefits more widely among the community than any other was the Platinum Jubilee Finance and Investment Corporation: 'It owed its existence entirely to the Aga Khan's generosity,' Amirali Fancy told me. 'Having accepted the three million rupees as a gift from the community, His Highness promptly returned them to be used for the betterment of his followers. This is how the Corporation came into being. Amirali Fancy became its first Chairman: 'The community was told that anyone wanting to form a co-operative credit society would be helped to the extent of eight times their capital at low interest rates—maximum two per cent—subject to their performance in the first year. We began by giving rupee for rupee, and when we were satisfied with progress we increased our contribution but the limit for larger societies was 300,000 rupees each.' Instructors were sent out to teach local staff, set up the co-operatives and supervise their workings. The beginnings were difficult but by 1969 there were ninety-five Ismaili co-operative credit societies in Pakistan and, says Fancy, 'no bad debts'.

So as to leave his father basking in the community's undivided homage, Aly kept in the background, which started a rumour that the Imam was deliberately down-grading his son and discouraging any inclination to regard him automatically as the Imam's successor. At this stage, the rumour did not seem to have reached the ears of Aly. Back on his European stamping ground he was cheerful, in great form, his touch as sure as ever. Two days before the Grand Prix de Deauville he heard that a four-year-old filly, Rosa Bonheur—a good filly without a great pedigree—was on sale. On Friday evening, rather than join a party of friends for dinner, he drove into the



country to inspect the horse and bought it for a modest price. On Sunday afternoon, it won the Grand Prix—and ten million francs. Not one to hide his feelings behind a mask of super-sophistication, he was exuberant.

Another rumour pursued him, this time about his finances. Marcus Marsh claimed that Aly owed the casinos 'something in the region of a quarter of a million' (pounds sterling) which, as most things that were said about Aly, was probably wide of the mark. Marsh also mentioned the magnitude of Aly's racing transactions: 'During his spell with me,' the trainer wrote, 'he sold horses to the value of £600,000, and this, coupled with prize money, must have raised something close to the million mark.'

When Aly missed the annual conference at Yakimour, where the next season's stud and racing operations were discussed, there were rumours about disagreements between him and his father. The Aga presided over the two-day talks which were attended by Madame Vuillier, Robert Muller and Major Hall: 'We reported to His Highness,' Major Hall said, 'and gave him a detailed picture of the position.' The Aga asked questions and many ideas came up. Some eighty hard and fast decisions were made. 'One of the problems was to arrange for nomination for the Queen's stallion Aureole,' said Major Hall. The Aga Khan decided to send Neocracy, which had bred Tulyar, and the result, in the passage of time, was St Crespin, which won the Imperial Produce and the Eclipse Stakes in England and the Arc de Triomphe in France—but failed in the Derby.



CHAPTER XIII

EAST Africa's Ismailis were preparing to match the Karachi Jubilee celebrations with spectacular weighing ceremonies in Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa when, early in January 1955, grave news reached them about their Imam. While staying at the ornate Cataract Hotel in the Egyptian resort of Aswan, where the climate is even kinder than on the Riviera, the Aga Khan went down with bronchial pneumonia and a high temperature, a calamity for a man of seventy-seven. The Begum was with him and Aiy hurried to his father's bedside. Ismaili leaders expecting to accompany him on the last stage of his journey to East Africa anxiously watched his progress. Although his condition improved, doctors would not even hear of a compromise plan to restrict the celebrations to one single ceremony in Kampala. There could be no question of the patient travelling the fifteen hundred miles—it might well be his death!

The dreaded word symbolised the gravity of the situation. It was no secret that the Aga Khan wanted to be buried at Aswan and had already chosen his tomb of rose-red granite: 'The Aga Khan wants to sleep in the hot sand overlooking the waters of the Nile,' the Begum told a friend, 'and when I die I want to lie beside him.' To banish the thought of death, which seemed so near, a villa was bought for him at Aswan, a white house on red basalt rock by the Nile with a view of the city. It was named Noor-el-Salaam (Light of Peace) but there was no saying whether he would ever be well enough to occupy it. At the moment, he just managed to sit through a token Jubilee ceremony in the lounge of the Cataract and the East African celebrations went ahead in his absence. Reports that his days were numbered raised the question of his succession, a talking



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point among his friends the world over. The community could not help wondering, the newspapers were speculating and Aly's name was bandied about in a manner which caused him severe embarrassment.

The matter came to a head when David Burk, of the London *Daily Express*, ran into Aly Khan in the lounge of the Cataract and bluntly confronted him with the rumours about his future. The Aga Khan was said to be still upset about his son's two divorces, not to speak of the prospect of him marrying another Hollywood film star, although this was no longer on the cards. Had there been a quarrel? 'There has never been the slightest disagreement between me and my father on this subject,' Aly told Burk. 'I know there are rumours but someone must have dreamt them up.' When Burk mentioned that some people doubted whether he, Prince Aly, would succeed his father as head of the Shia Ismailis, Aly retorted: 'Why should there be any doubt?' He said he had regularly visited Ismaili communities and loyally performed his religious duties as his father's representative . . .

Published in the *Daily Express*, the interview was interpreted as Aly's way of saying that he fully expected to succeed his father but it was not long before some of his friends discovered an element of doubt in his own mind. Aly could not possibly have overlooked the significance of the Aga's persistent harping on his fast driving, flying in all weathers and risking his life as an amateur rider. The Aga had made no secret of his premonition that his son's life would not be a long one. The clear implication was that he would not wish to entrust the welfare of the community to someone who seemed to court an early death.

The answer to the question about the succession was hidden among fifteen thick volumes of documents and deeds which listed the Aga Khan's properties and made up his Last Will and Testament. In consultation with English and Swiss lawyers, Maître Ardoin, the faithful adviser, prepared a final version which was completed and signed in May 1955 when the Aga Khan was back on his feet and visiting London for a few days. It was deposited in the vaults of Lloyds Bank and, until opened after the Aga's death, no one, except Ardoin and the solicitors—Slaughter and May—would know whom the Imam of the Ismailis had designated as his successor. Speculation was also rife about the financial provisions, al-



though the Begum, Princess Andrée, Aly, Sadruddin, Karim, Aryn and Yasmin were known to have been provided for in individual trusts:

'The Will mentioned a few million pounds,' I was told by Maître Ardoin, 'but the bulk of the property, real estate, shares, other assets were held by companies and trusts.' Some of the Aga Khan's accounts were overdrawn because his advisers thought it financially useful. Conversely, literally hundreds of properties, many of them covering land of great value, came under the heading of the community but were designated for specific purposes, as sports grounds, hospitals, schools, mosques: 'Who would buy a hospital in Nairobi?' an Ismaili leader asked, 'or a mosque or a school?' While the value of these properties was immense and they were all in the Aga Khan's name, they were not really negotiable.

Owing to his grave condition, plans to provide him with a permanent home on Swiss territory were speeded up. The choice—the Begum's—fell on 'La Rivière', a charming villa in Versoix by Lake Geneva which used to belong to a wealthy hotel owner. Proximity to Evian, where the Aga Khan used to take the waters, was decisive and arrangements for a 'carrier' to take a quantity of the precious water to Versoix every day were put in hand. The house was renamed 'La Barakat', renovated and furnished. Aly Khan acquired a piece of land to build his own house on Swiss soil and Sadruddin bought the Swiss Château de Collonges-Bellerive—it might not be long before he found a wife and needed a home of his own.

As the Aga Khan improved and returned to Europe, talk about his health, fortune and succession subsided. With the agonising moment of decision fading into the distance, the weight of uncertainty also lifted from Aly's shoulders. The winter of discontent was over and his mood was once more in harmony with Paris in the spring. Impetuously, he telephoned Bettina who had lingered in his mind since their brief encounters but she was too busy to see him. When he persisted and tracked her down in the middle of a photographic session at the studios of the Paris magazine, *Elle*, they arranged to meet at his house.

Rushed as usual, doing too much, seeing too many people and trying to be in several places at the same time, Aly was late and Bettina left angrily before he arrived but he sent his car to bring her



back, took her to dinner and to see a Western in a cinema in the Champs Elysées where, to her immense astonishment, he promptly fell asleep. They went on dancing and when Bettina refused his invitation to spend a weekend with him at his stud farm in St Crespin near Deauville it was only because she had professional commitments she would not break. They were no longer in doubt about each other, set on a collision course and bound to end up in each other's arms. Aly was not yet aware of it but it was more than just another happy-go-lucky encounter and Bettina resolved to be more than one of Aly's passing fancies.

She had qualities of temperament and character which augured well for their association, quite apart from her captivating elfin figure, glowing red hair, wistfully smiling eyes and handsome face with the freckles which often defied make-up. A daughter of the solid Breton soil, little Simone Bodin, as she was, and her sister were still babies when their mother took them to Elboeuf in Normandy when their father deserted the family and his job with the railway. She went to school at Elbeuf, grew into an enchanting girl whom Paris lured although her elder sister after a none too successful foray into the post-liberation capital had returned home and married a local lad. Simone's animal grace and charm assured her a better reception in the glamour-starved big city and soon earned her a job as a mannequin with a minor fashion house where she was discovered by Jacques Fath. The young couturier liked to give his models new names. Simone Bodin became Bettina.

After her first uncertain steps along the catwalk she soon found her feet. Early marriage to Beno Graziani, an Italian photographer, was less successful and did not last long but she still bears his name. She showed Jacques Fath clothes in many parts of the world, and after his death, joined Givenchy. Famous photographers, like the late Bob Capa, sought her out as model and friend, some remarkable people responded to her attractive personality. Picasso agreed to become a prop in a set of fashion photographs which featured her as the star. She captured Jean Cocteau's imagination and Guy Schoeller introduced her to the world of publishing—and to Françoise Sagan whom he later married. After Schoeller came Peter Viertel, the American writer who has since become Deborah Kerr's husband.

Bettina had been with Peter for two or three years when Aly



drew her into his social orbit. He asked her to give up her job and without much ado had her things transferred from her place at Garches, on the outskirts of Paris, to his house in the Boulevard Maurice Barrès. But for her the great moment came in Cannes, at the Château de l'Horizon, one evening, when Gany, the butler, had laid the table on the terrace, the cicadas were chirping, the waves sighing, the stars shining. So were Bettina's eyes: 'I thought I must be dreaming,' she said. 'It all seemed too beautiful to be true.' After the meal Aly took her by the hand: 'This is your home, Zinette,' he told her gently—'Zinette' or 'Zine' were his pet names for her. 'One day,' he said later, 'we are going to be married.' Bettina brought order into his homes, which had lacked a woman's touch, and chased away 'the women in slippers' as she called the female hangers-on she had encountered on previous visits.

For once the family was delighted with the woman of his choice, who was so different from her flamboyant predecessors. They received the pleasant and modest girl with open arms. That year, Rita Hayworth at long last agreed to let Yasmin spend some time with her father in Europe. Bettina looked after the child, who became very attached to her: 'Dear Bettina,' she wrote on one occasion as the aircraft carried her back to the United States at the end of her visit. 'I have a good flight in the plane; I will miss you very much. I hope I will see you soon. Love, Yasmin.' Aly, who was with his daughter, wrote a postscript in French: '*Ma Zinette adorée. Tu nous manque. Nous pensons toi. Je t'embrasse de mille de fois.*'

To keep up with Aly's perpetual motion required great stamina. Bettina never flagged or complained. On race-courses, at Chantilly or Giltown, at social gatherings, she made an even-tempered, strikingly handsome companion. When Aly gambled at a casino, Bettina waited up for him; when he danced with another woman, she sat the dance out with friends, refusing to take the floor with anyone but him. When he travelled without her, she was there to greet him on his return. Nobody was allowed to guess that gossip about him disturbed her. Kim Novak came to Europe to attend the Cannes Film Festival and caught Aly's eye. She later told the story of their courtship or infatuation in an American magazine, adding a few details which cast doubt on her memory. Her first glimpse of Aly, she said, was at Yakimour, where he was tending the roses and came



up to her holding an earth-covered hand out to her. It does not quite tally with the image of Aly as his friends knew him. Bettina made no scene, and did not seem to take these things too tragically. She loved Aly for qualities of the heart which were less obvious to outsiders and would have made less interesting magazine material.

So as to share his sporting interests, Bettina began to unravel the mysteries of French and English race cards and loyally ran through the pages of *Le Figaro*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Sport Complet* and the racing news in English newspapers when he had finished with them. He spoke to her about his favourite horses as one might about dear members of the family and showed her the beautifully kept graves with white tomb-stones in which some of them lay buried on his stud farms. Patiently she suffered his 'jockey régime' of Turkish baths, massage and dieting, and watched him racing. In the Tremblay Gentlemen Riders Grand Prix, one of his rivals was Group Captain Peter Townsend. It was the social highlight of the sporting season but the Aga Khan refused to watch Aly risking his limbs and left before the race in which neither of the celebrated protagonists gained a place.

Aly was finding it increasingly difficult to make the required weight. At times he kept looking frantically for his glasses and complained bitterly that his eyesight was deteriorating, his hair thinning and that he was getting old. He could be irritable, too. With Bettina standing by, he would examine the daily ration of press cuttings about him and fume about 'inaccurate stories', screw the paper into balls and fling them away—Harvey, his dog, was always lying in wait to catch them.

Bettina came to know the Aga Khan better while he was still convalescing at Yakimour and thought he approved of her. Seeing him and Aly together, she began to understand their complicated relationship. As a boy Aly had seen so little of his father whom he loved and feared at the same time: '. . . and yet,' she remarked, '(Aly) who had suffered so much from his separation from his parents did not manage to bring up his own children in their family surroundings.'

Karim and Amyn spent August at l'Horizon with their mother while Aly stayed at Deauville. But if he was not close to his boys, the prospect of seeing Yasmin always excited him. Unlike Karim,



whose interest in horses was non-existent and who felt inhibited when talking about them to his knowledgeable father, Yasmin loved them and had a good eye for them on race tracks or stud farms. With 'Yassy' around, Aly created a children's world with games and parties which he enjoyed as much as she did. He was a real-life, fairy-tale prince, who had, perhaps, never fully grown up.

For Bettina travelling in his wake it was also a fairy-tale, magic-carpet passage through life. Aly took her with him on the first stage of a tour of Ismaili centres. They lingered for a few days in Cairo where he met friends and played bridge, then flew on to Beirut and Salamiya. He warned her what to expect but she was overwhelmed by the roaring reception from excited Ismaili crowds mobbing her prince, who looked striking in a burnous and the local head-gear, an Arab among his Arab brothers.

There was no respite. At home in Paris, telephone calls from New York, Buenos Aires, Karachi or Nairobi pursued him. If Bettina hoped for a private chat, she was liable to be disappointed. In his own room, Eric Bigio, his secretary, was taking dictation—letters, messages—Aly's voice rising above the buzz of his electric razor. The corridor was full of people waiting to catch his ear, among them, more often than not, Alec Head, trainer and friend, Robert Muller, Ismaili visitors. While putting on his trousers he was already giving instructions for Lucien, the chauffeur, to warm up the engine of the car. His progress past all these people was slow as he shook hands all round, exchanged views, listened and looked at documents and had a word and a smile for all before letting himself out of the front door.

He was not gone long when he was on the telephone calling Bettina to warn her that a number of people would be dropping in for dinner that night ('Talk it over with the chef, *ma chérie*')—when they arrived it was frequently long before he himself had returned home. At l'Horizon people kept turning up whom Aly had casually invited months earlier in the course of his travels and long forgotten but they were well received, except that Aly himself was unlikely to be there. Among those who always enjoyed his hospitality was the telephone operator of the London Ritz Hotel who conducted a clearing house for the Aga's and Aly's messages throughout the year to be rewarded with a summer holiday at the château.



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Aly was not there either when Sadruddin and Karim came from Harvard to spend their vacation in the South of France. That summer, Sadruddin, twenty-three, more studious than his elder half-brother but not averse to a light-hearted adventure, met the strange, exotic Nina Dyer, Ceylon-born daughter of an English planter. Nina had been a leading model in Paris and London and briefly married to the immensely wealthy Heinrich von Thyssen, heir to a German industrial empire, who gave her a Caribbean island and a panther, both curiously appropriate to her personality, and when they were divorced, settled half a million pounds on her. She was twenty-six with a reputation for eccentricity—apart from the black panther, Nina shared her fifteen-room villa in Versailles with two hundred parrots, eight Pekinese and two Borzois—and her marriage was already on the rocks when she and Sadruddin came together in a holiday romance which seemed unlikely to last much longer than the hot Riviera summer but swiftly led to an engagement. The Aga Khan gave his blessing and the wedding date was eventually fixed for July 15, 1957.

Karim spent most of his time with grandfather or one of his secretaries, Mademoiselle Gaetane Beguel, researching and acquainting himself with the Imam's affairs, both personal and religious. Since he was not staying at his father's château, Karim did not notice the changes in some of the familiar rooms—empty walls where most of Aly's treasured paintings used to hang. The Dégas, the Utrillos, Renoirs, Raoul Dufys, works by Vlaminck, Modigliani and Dunoyer de Ségonzac which made up half of Aly's collection—the other half was at the Boulevard Maurice Barrès and also in the process of being taken down—were packed and ready for despatch to Paris.

A few months later the paintings turned up at the Galerie Charpentier, where they were offered for auction. The news that Prince Aly Khan was selling persuaded many that he was—as someone put it—as broke as a millionaire can be, or, in modern parlance, suffering from a shortage of liquidity: 'Everyone was busy saying that Prince Aly Khan was getting rid of his pictures in order to be able to feed his horses,' Bettina noted but went on to deny that he was short of money. 'He simply wanted to buy some new paintings,' she insisted. Still, she did not disguise how sad he was about parting with his treasures.



When the Dufy painting of Deauville racecourse which used to hang in Aly's Paris house came up for sale, the Aga Khan, in a characteristic gesture, bought it back and gave it to Aly as a birthday present. Mrs Mike Todd (Elizabeth Taylor), already embarked upon her purchasing spree which was still going strong a dozen years later, bought Aly's Dégas, one of the Utrillos and most of the Dufys. When Aly saw the bare walls at l'Horizon with the outlines of the paintings he decided to start buying again, acquired a few new Dufys and looked out for works with a 'horsey' motif by English and Dutch masters. Bettina says he never mentioned the auction again.

Next door at Yakimour, the Aga Khan was in precarious health. His temperature was high and erratic and he felt weak and tired. One of his great joys was a visit from little Yasmin who was in Europe on a six months' visit and growing up into a delightful girl, much in her father's image. Occasionally, she accompanied her grandfather on a drive along the Croisette and past the Riviera landmarks, signposts on many stages of his life in the past sixty years.

The subject of racing also roused his flagging spirits. Plans for the future of studs and stables occupied his mind. One of his last contributions to the sport was the production of Charlottesville, bred to the Vuillier points formula for hereditary characteristics to which he subscribed to the end. Charlottesville, a worthy symbol of the Aga Khan's acumen, earned £75,000 in stake money in a spectacular racing career and now occupies pride of place as the leading stallion in the Ballymany Stud in the Curragh.

The Aga Khan's public image was unimpaired. People still saw him as an international bon viveur and he responded with good humour. In a radio interview he was asked how he related his good living to his religious position: 'I don't know why the Gods should reserve the good things in life for bad people,' he replied. That spring—1957—he again came to Chantilly but was not well enough to go to the races. He went to lunch with Aly and Bettina, was still interested in good food and very complimentary when the chef produced two of his favourite dishes, calf's head followed by strawberry mousse, but did not eat. His weight was down from 240 to 170 lb, and the heat-wave aggravated his condition. The Begum was deeply worried: 'He should never have come here!' she grumbled.



He was anxious to get home—home, at the end of a long nomadic life, being Switzerland. The end could not be far away and the extraordinary old man who felt a deep responsibility for millions of followers wanted to die in his legal residence so as to leave his and the community's affairs in perfect order.

A Viscount airliner was chartered and an ambulance took the ailing prince to the airport where he was carried aboard on a stretcher. The Begum, Sadruddin and Nina Dyer joined the aircraft and Professor Laporte, the French heart specialist, and two nurses went along. At Geneva an ambulance was waiting to take the Aga to his villa. He was extremely ill and his condition continued to deteriorate. At the end of the first week of July all hope dwindled. The Begum refused to leave her husband's bedside. Karim was summoned from Harvard (but Aynon postponed his journey so as to sit a vital examination). Yasmin was already on her way to Europe by sea. Aly rushed to Geneva and telephoned Bettina in Paris asking her to await Yasmin's arrival and bring her to Versoix without delay. They travelled from Le Bourget and when they arrived Aly took the child straight to the Aga—Yasmin's visit had been a wonderful tonic for his father, he said, when they emerged from his room. Ismaili leaders from East Africa and the sub-continent began to arrive to pay their last respects to the Imam who had guided the community's fortunes for seventy-two years, longer than any other.

In the early hours of July 11, the Aga's heart-beat weakened. Aly and Sadruddin were summoned to Barakat but their dying father could no longer speak. Karim came and the Begum was still keeping up her vigil. Four doctors were in attendance and nurses left the sick-room only to change their clothes or take a bite. At midday, the Aga Khan was sleeping peacefully. Forty minutes later his life slipped quietly away. The Swiss doctor who signed the death certificate in accordance with local regulations gave heart failure and cancer as the causes of death. Aly, Sadruddin and Karim filed past the bed. They had tears in their eyes and looked strained and tired. The Begum was numb with sorrow. When Yasmin was told that her grandfather had gone for ever she could not quite understand but wept. Nina and Bettina, who had been waiting in an adjacent room, were crying. The curtains were drawn and darkness fell over a great figure of the age.



The news of the Aga Khan's death spread quickly. Ismaili leaders came from their hotels and gathered in the grounds of the villa. Reporters, press photographers and newsreel cameramen began to arrive and the road outside was filled with a growing crowd eager to catch a glimpse of the comings and goings. The drive was jammed with cars and three policemen reinforced their lone comrade who had been standing guard outside. They were trying to keep a passage for the diplomats and friends who wanted to present their condolences but by now the crowd was so thick that some of them could hardly make their way to the villa. Aly, visibly wilting in the heat and showing signs of tension, his face drawn and shirt unbuttoned, scanned messages, dictated notes, greeted arrivals, busied himself as if to keep his mind off the question that was on all lips.

The Imam was dead, long live the Imam—but who was he? In spite of the genuine grief among family and followers, the succession was the chief topic of speculation. Would it be Aly or had Sadruddin superseded his elder brother as the Aga's choice? Karim's name was already being mentioned, even Amyn who had arrived too late to see his grandfather alive seemed to be in the running. Maître Ardoin was on hand to discuss legal and financial points with Aly and Sadruddin but not until the man from Lloyds Bank brought the Will from London would there be a full answer. When the bank official arrived the following morning, he was accompanied by Otto Giesen, a solicitor from Slaughter and May.

In the garden, some thirty Ismailis and their wives were waiting to pay homage to the forty-ninth Imam. Inside, in the villa's ground floor sitting-room, the family assembled to hear Otto Giessen reading the ten-page Will and the two-page Codicil:

'I SULTAN SIR MAHOMED SHAH AGA KHAN, G.C.I.E., G.C.S.I. born on the Second day of November One thousand eight hundred and seventy seven at Karachi temporarily residing at the Hotel Ritz London HEREBY REVOKE all Wills and other testamentary dispositions heretofore made by me AND DECLARE this to BE MY LAST WILL which I make this Twenty fifth day of May One thousand nine hundred and fifty five.'

The Will proceeded to state his domicile—Switzerland—and his executors—Lloyds Bank (Foreign) Limited of 10 Moorgate in the City of London. It then enumerated the Aga Khan's marriages.



Under Shia Moslem Law his only heirs were his two sons, Aly and Sadruddin, and his wife Yve—and no others. Paragraph 8 of the Will, at long last, unveiled the mystery of the succession: ‘Ever since the time of my ancestor Ali, the first Imam,’ the solicitor read on, ‘that is to say over a period of thirteen hundred years, it has always been the tradition of our family that each Imam chooses his successor at his absolute and unfettered discretion from amongst any of his descendants whether they be sons or remoter male issue.’

The preamble made it clear beyond doubt that the succession on this occasion was not passing from father to son. At that moment Aly knew that he would not be the next Imam. Otto Giessen, a trace of accent betraying his German origin, continued to recite in an unemotional, almost monotonous voice: ‘. . . and in these circumstances and in view of the fundamentally altered conditions in the world in very recent years due to the great changes which have taken place including the discoveries of atomic science I am convinced that it is in the best interests of the Shia Moslem Ismailian Community that I should be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up and developed during recent years and in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office as Imam.

‘For these reasons and although he is not now one of my heirs, I APPOINT my grandson KARIM, the son of my son ALY SALOMONE KHAN to succeed to the title of AGA KHAN and to be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismailian followers, and should my said grandson KARIM predecease me then I APPOINT his brother AMYN MAHOMED, the second son of my son ALY SALOMONE KHAN as my successor to the Imamate. I DESIRE that my successor shall during the first seven years of his Imamate be guided on questions of general Imamate policy by my said wife YVETTE called YVE BLANCHE LABROUSSE, the Begum Aga Khan, who has been familiar for many years with the problems facing my followers and in whose wise judgement I place the greatest confidence . . .’

The die was cast, the rest was routine. Out of a sense of duty, the family listened to the other provisions. The Begum was to decide the form of his coffin and the fashion of his tomb and the place of his burial—£25,000 was to be placed at her disposal for the purpose (the



amount was doubled by the Codicil). Yve, Aly and Sadruddin should share his jewellery. Only the paragraph dealing with the horses revived the flagging attention. Any race-horse belonging solely to the Aga at his death was to be sold by public auction and the proceeds to form part of his estate; any race-horse in which he had a share was to be offered to the partner for purchase which applied chiefly to Aly. Indeed, his share of any property owned jointly with the Begum or Aly and Sadruddin should go to the partner. Persons in his service at the time of his death were to get tax free wages and pensions for eighteen months, one Norwegian nurse who had been with the family for a long time received £10,000 under the Will.

Objets d'art, furniture and effects in the Begum's villa at Le Cannet ('Yakimour') became her absolute property and a similar provision in respect of the Versoix villa was made in the Codicil. *Objets d'art*, furniture and effects in Princess Andrée's villa at Antibes ('Villa Jane-Andrée') became her absolute property. The Aga Khan solemnly requested Aly always to be kind and devoted to Sadruddin, to give him good advice and to treat him with great affection as if he were his own son; he asked Aly and Sadruddin to treat his wife Yve and his former wife Andrée Joséphine with great consideration and kindness.

According to Shia Moslem Law, all the Aga Khan's property was divided into three equal parts. Of the first two-thirds, the Begum was to get an eighth, the other seven-eighths to be divided equally between Aly and Sadruddin. The residue of the third third after payment of legacies and duties was to be divided between his three heirs in the same proportion.

Religious property, on the other hand, *jamatkhanas* and burying grounds in India and East Africa went to Karim, the new Aga Khan, including premises which were part of *jamatkhanas* even if used for secular purposes. Without any specific reference in the Will, it was, of course, understood that the new Imam's income—apart from the proceeds of his grandfather's trust—would come from his followers, who would now start paying the traditional *zakat* and *khums* to him. The Will was astutely drafted to reveal as little as possible about the state of the Aga Khan's finances at the time of his death and gave no hint of the huge amounts involved in the trusts, corporations and properties which now devolved on his heirs. There was nothing



about his oil shares which had multiplied many times in value, his investments in Indian and African enterprises, his stakes in European corporations, the proceeds of most advantageous financial operations by a friend of the world's great with access to invaluable advance and inside information. The value of his racing interests alone was many millions of pounds. Estate left in England was valued at £709,700 before estate duty.

The Aga Khan was much wealthier than his standard of living suggested and, compared with that of other Indian princes, was positively modest. Even split among his principal heirs, it still gave each of them control over substantial assets and guaranteed them enviable incomes. How much of his followers' contributions the new Aga Khan would retain for his own purposes was a matter entirely for his discretion but it soon emerged that he intended to return no less to the community—if not more—than his grandfather had done.

Those immediately associated with the final chapter in Versoix have kept tight lips about individual reactions except for Bettina who wrote: 'To Aly it seemed that his father's preference for his son was a kind of public humiliation for him . . . He was never quite the same from that day on. His deep sadness took cover beneath a life of still more inhuman activity.' But she also said that Aly, as all knew him fully expected, did not bear the slightest resentment towards Karim, on the contrary he behaved generously and unselfishly in a difficult situation. About Karim his mother said to me: 'He accepted the situation easily and did not regard it as a burden. He had a strong sense of mission . . . an instinctive thing that works automatically. His mission—it is something that some people have.'

Still, it took some time for the young Imam to adjust himself to his new responsibilities. Some thought that he looked dazed when he first emerged from the session with the lawyers. Sorrow about the loss of his grandfather to whom he was so close mingled with apprehension about his relationship with his father. In Bettina's words—which might well reflect Aly's feelings at the time—Karim was now the spiritual father of his own father. His natural humility enabled him to adapt himself to this unnatural posture. Neither too independent nor too solicitous, he continued to act as a loyal, devoted son.

The rush of events carried him along without giving him much



time to think. The Ismailis were waiting to greet their new Imam—some of them, like Sir Eboo Pirbhai, he knew well, others were introduced to him by Aly. Reporters and photographers from many parts of the world demanded their rights and Karim girded himself to face them. For their benefit he read out the provisions of the Will dealing with the succession and mentioned his grandfather's wish that he be guided by the Begum for the next seven years. Aly stood by silently but the photographers caught father and son in a picture of perfect harmony.

Next morning, a chair was placed on the lawn in the garden to serve as a *gadi* for a simple enthronement ceremony. The forty-ninth Imam appeared before the waiting Ismaili leaders. Looking solemn in his blue suit, pale but younger than his twenty years, Karim took his seat. One after another of the Ismaili nobles approached and pledged his loyalty. Not wanting to steal the limelight Aly kept away.

At Barakat, family, friends and followers filed past the Aga Khan's body, which was covered with a white silk shroud. As soon as the public was admitted, hundreds of tourists invaded the house, brandishing their cameras and allowing their curiosity to get the better of their decorum. The doors were hurriedly closed. Instructions went out to Aswan to prepare a temporary resting place in the grounds of the Aga's house which he had not lived to see. In time a permanent mausoleum would arise behind the villa.

Next morning, a hearse carried the heavy oak coffin from Versoix through the centre of Geneva. On its slow way to the airport, it was escorted by police on motorcycles and followed by more than two dozen limousines, the Begum and Karim occupying the first, Aly and Sadruddin the second. A silent crowd watched the coffin being hoisted into a chartered D.C.6 for Cairo. Karim, the Begum and Aly travelled with it while other members of the family and Ismaili leaders went by the next regular flight.

At Aswan airport, some six hundred miles south of Cairo, where no aircraft had landed in many months, a gang of bare-bodied, dark-skinned men cleared the sand from the runway with brooms made of palm leaves. The temperature was in the nineties. The Governor of Aswan and a small group of local officials and reporters were awaiting the arrival of the funeral party. Photographers shielded their cameras from the blazing sun. As the aircraft appeared on the



horizon, descended and landed in a cloud of dust, a red fire brigade vehicle emerged from a wooden shed and made towards the runway. The aircraft's doors swung open and the Begum appeared in an ample pitch-black sari which covered her head. She wiped the tears from her eyes, which were blinded by the piercing light. Behind her came Karim Aga Khan, looking tired but completely composed. Aly was last to emerge.

So far everything had gone according to plan. But the soldiers who were transferring the heavy coffin from the aircraft to the red vehicle got into a tangle. Shouting conflicting instructions they created pandemonium as they jostled in narrow space. Nasser's big wreath was already wilting in the heat and landed in the dust: 'No funeral march, no flags at half-mast, no guard of honour,' one German newspaper correspondent noted, 'on the Aswan runway the coffin of the Aga Khan was unloaded like a packing case.'

Specially opened for the occasion, the Cataract Hotel was expecting big business. So were the taxi drivers, souvenir pedlars and owners of motorboats. Visions of a Pharaoh's funeral procession across the Nile faded as soon as the coffin went on its way to the white villa on the other bank. An arguing, gesticulating horde of luggage porters got hold of it dragging rather than carrying it. More than once it looked as if the coffin would slip into the water as they laboriously manœuvred it on to a boat. Owing to a misunderstanding, the family was waiting for transport at the Cataract Hotel and it took half an hour to get them to the starting point. By this time the Nile was thick with boats carrying mourners and sightseers. At the villa, the tiny landing stage could not accommodate the approaching flotilla. The Begum was distressed, Karim, Aly and Sadruddin unhappy, soaked in perspiration, their fine black silk suits crumpled.

With difficulty the coffin was placed in position and Sheikh Mohammed Mahmud intoned a recital of the Koran. After the brief service, all but the Begum returned to the mainland and the Cataract Hotel. First to reach the terrace, Aly rushed straight into the dining-room and buried his glowing face in an ice-cooled water melon, Sadruddin asked for a telegram form and a reporter, looking over his shoulder, read his message addressed to Nina Dyer in Paris: 'Aswan glowing heat—complete chaos—impatient to return to you . . .' But that evening the new Aga Khan, his brother and his



uncles presented themselves to the community leaders in immaculate silk suits. Conscious of his new duties, the Aga Khan played host to the Ismailis while Sadruddin talked to journalists.

The service in the small Abu-Shok Mosque next morning was a dignified affair. Having discarded their shoes, the late Aga's four closest male relatives led the congregation in prayer. In devotion they touched the ground with their foreheads. To emphasise the universality of the Ismaili faith, Aly wore a Pakistani Persian lamb hat, Sadruddin a Burmese skull cap, Karim and Aryn Arab tarbooshes. At the villa they carried the heavy coffin on their shoulders through the crowd of praying Ismailis to the inner court and the small vault. It had only just been made by the local builder, was found to be too small and had to be widened by hammer and chisel.

Before night fell, the three principal characters in the succession drama were off on their separate ways, Sadruddin to rejoin his fiancée (their marriage was postponed until the end of the forty-day mourning period), the new Imam to see his mother in London, and Aly Khan on a mission to avert the first threat to the Imamate of his son.



CHAPTER XIV

ALY's destination was Syria, where the community was in an uproar. Syria's Ismailis seem to have taken it for granted that Aly would succeed his father as Imam. He was the only leader they knew well because the Aga Khan and other members of the family had only rarely visited their country. His courage, his panache, his manly virtues counted so highly among these hardy mountain men that Karim's choice was not as loyally received in Salamiya as in other Ismaili centres. There was talk of choosing Aly by acclamation as Imam, which could only lead to a split.

Aly was the last person to encourage heresy or to expose the community to another schism. To greet him on arrival, Ismailis came out in their thousands, surrounded his jeep and pressed so hard that it broke down under the weight. By horse and mule he made his way to remote villages, talked to the elders and addressed the rank and file proclaiming that his father had chosen his son Karim al-Huseini as Imam and that he, for one, accepted the choice. Karim had asked him to say that he would come and visit Syria as soon as possible. Aly's charm and powers of persuasion restored the situation. It was an act of splendid generosity which rose above his disappointment about his own exclusion. Syria's Ismailis rallied behind the new Imam.

There were similar rumblings at Sargodha and Kasur in the Punjab, home of some fifteen hundred Ismailis, mostly owners of small businesses. One group led by Dr Aziz Ali 'went into opposition', refused to acknowledge Karim and claimed Aly as the new Imam. As soon as he heard of the trouble, Amirali Fancy, head of Pakistan's Ismailis, travelled to the Punjab to put the malcontents to rights but was not wholly successful. A few weeks later, when Aly



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arrived in Karachi, Fancy informed him of the incident: 'Let me talk to those people,' Aly volunteered at once. Fancy arranged a meeting between Aziz and Aly, who was staying at the President's house. Once more, Aly made his position perfectly clear: 'My son is the rightful Imam,' he insisted.

Outside in the street, supporters of Dr Aziz staged a small demonstration and shouted 'Shah Aly Khan Hazar Imam Zindabad!' (Long live Imam Prince Aly.) Aziz emerged from the interview brandishing a signed photograph of Aly from which it was deduced that Aly had not seriously discouraged the dissidents. He had certainly not encouraged them, and the revolt fizzled out except for a few families who were excluded from the community and banned from the *jamatkhana*. The rest remained firmly loyal and when, a year or so later, Prince Karim visited Sargodha, put up a considerable sum towards a new hospital and awarded fifty scholarships for higher education he was roundly cheered and there was no sign of any opposition.

In the meantime the new Imam was immersed in work and confronted with a series of difficult decisions. Not that he suffered from any shortage of help and advice, on the contrary. The shadow of the Begum loomed large. The Aga's idea that she should advise his grandson for seven years was obviously rooted in the memory of his own mother who virtually acted as Imam after his own enthronement; but it was difficult to reconcile with his wish that the community should be guided by a modern young man. Another problem for Prince Karim was to find common ground with the elderly leaders of the community, who would offer him advice but would expect to be guided by the Imam, however young. Because subtle pressures came to bear on him at the very moment when he assumed supreme authority, he developed the iron will beneath the gentle manner which became his outstanding characteristic.

The problems of Africa and Asia erupted from the history books where he first encountered them and suddenly demanded his personal attention. Before he could cope with the new world into which he was plunged, he needed time to think and relax with his own family. At the end of a momentous month he reached London to join his mother whose natural protective instincts drew her close to him. In the privacy of the Eaton Square duplex, in his own room among his



books, drawings and sculptures, he found the first respite since the historic eleventh of July which would henceforth, as long as he lived, be celebrated by millions as the Day of Imamate.

Preparations for a quick tour of Ismaili centres went ahead at once setting the tone and determining the rhythm of the Imam's future travels. In consultation with Ismaili leaders the timetable was worked out with almost contemptuous disregard of distances which placed it firmly in the jet age: August 4: Visit to Karachi, Pakistan; civil and religious functions. August 9: Visit to Bombay, India; civic and religious functions and conferences with Ismaili leaders. August 12: Visit to Nairobi, Kenya, at the beginning of a week's tour of the principal East African Ismaili centres, including Zanzibar.

Although, in his own words, his life was now dedicated to the community, he was anxious to complete his studies, which was clearly in the interests of his followers. His mother also thought he ought to return to Harvard but his new responsibilities and ceremonial duties were likely to keep him away from the university for the better part of a year. Ahead of him loomed the elaborate ceremonies of the *Takht Nishinis*, the formal installation of Hazar Imam in East Africa, India and Pakistan, which were scheduled for the end of the year and the beginning of the next, each an occasion for a big speech. Neither would it be a matter of a few polite formal phrases. To his European and American friends, Karim might remain the charming, natural and cheerful companion they knew. His followers took a different view of him: 'We all hope,' said Mr Ataur Rahman Khan, Chief Minister of East Pakistan, 'that from his leadership the Muslim world will be as benefited as from his predecessor's.' With the duties came the honours. The Queen of England conferred on Karim Aga Khan the title of Highness which his grandfather had held by the grace of Queen Victoria.

The other side of the medal was less glittering. As the new Aga Khan, the twenty-year-old prince and religious leader became public property, a prime target for insidious commentaries. An early report claimed to reveal a second secret Will of the Aga Khan and talked of frantic attempts to compose a violent quarrel between Prince Karim and the Begum involving millions, before it came before the courts. There was no truth in the story. With as much gusto Prince Karim's



private life was examined in an Arabian Nights aura which turned him overnight from a boyish, sports-loving Harvard man into an Eastern Romeo. Presenting him as a worthy son of the amorous Aly reports described a veritable world war in which young ladies of every nationality seemed to fight for the heart and the hand of the young Aga Khan.

They were a handsome lot. Pride of place was allotted to Sylvia Casablanca whose friendship with Karim had survived their separation. Bunny Esterhazy figured next on the list of potential brides: 'Bunny met Prince Karim shortly before his grandfather's death,' the newspapers reported—quick match-making this! Andrea Milos von Vangel, another Hungarian girl, was said to have become secretly engaged to Karim when they were still at school and an Egyptian newspaper told romance-hungry readers that Karim and Mona el Badrawi, seventeen-year-old daughter of an Egyptian financier, were promised to each other. A French starlet, Anne-Marie Mersen, completed Karim's *ronde*, except for Kim Novak, whose inclusion indicated a certain confusion among reporters about which glamour girl was Aly's and which Karim's. Karim's cup was overflowing when girls started writing to newspapers to offer themselves to him. A Swiss girl's only condition was that she should remain his only wife, a French girl claimed him by rights because his grandfather had chosen two French women as his wives, and a third said she was willing to adopt the Muslim faith if he would marry her.

The frivolities which occupied the daily Press could not have been more remote from the young Aga Khan's preoccupations on the eve of his trip to Pakistan, the first big test of his career as Imam. It was a daunting prospect. Karim's poker face did not show the tension, and the upsurge of warmth and adulation which greeted him on arrival in Karachi was such as to dissolve all apprehension. Headed by their leaders in traditional cloaks and gold-threaded turbans, the community turned out in strength. Aged men knelt before him and kissed his hand; many prostrated themselves and tried to touch his clothes. A little shy and self-conscious but deeply moved, he accepted the homage and made a short speech which reflected genuine feeling: 'I shall cherish the memory of your love and affection,' he said, and assured his followers that they were near to him and ever present in his heart and thoughts: 'I have dedicated



my life to the uplift and progress of Ismailis all over the world and I pray for all your happiness and success.'

At the *jamatkhana*, the ceremony of *bayat* (allegiance) was performed when followers pledged their loyalty by kissing the new Imam's hand. He was sitting on an elevated chair, a slim, handsome youth whom they regarded as near divine and infallible. The community leaders sat by his side, knelt by him, made their reports about health, youth, housing, religious affairs, each about the department of which he was in charge. They discussed the long tour for which he would return later in the year. They asked him to visit their homes: 'Every Ismaili house is a shrine to the Aga Khan,' as one of them told me.

The only non-community function he undertook was to donate an Aga Khan Gold Cup to the Karachi Racing Club in honour of his grandfather. After a brief visit to Bombay, he travelled to East Africa reaching Nairobi on August 12. Chaperoned by Sir Eboo Pirbhai, he went on to Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam and Zanzibar (where he was awarded the 'Brilliant Star of Zanzibar'). He was shown over the grounds chosen for his formal installation in October. The tour was a trial run for the *Takht Nishinis*.

Returning from Africa, his first stop was the Côte d'Azur where he joined his father at the Château de l'Horizon. The atmosphere was relaxed. Karim talked about his school and the exams he still had to sit. Although Aly was sombre on occasions and the situation was delicate, father and son seemed closer than ever.

Together, they travelled to Geneva where, at the end of the mourning period, Sadruddin and Nina were to be married. The Press made a lot of fuss about the precious engagement ring and the motor-car which was Sadruddin's wedding present to his bride. Rumour had it that the late Aga Khan had disapproved of the marriage, that Nina was disappointed not to be the next Begum. Sadruddin skilfully disabused reporters of these notions—they were far off the mark. The obligatory civil wedding at the town hall was followed by the traditional Muslim ceremony in the privacy of Château Bellerive over which the young Aga Khan presided. Nina became Princess Shirin which is Arabic for 'Sweetness'. One photograph of the occasion shows Sadruddin carrying his bride across the threshold of the Château with Aly, Karim and Aryn watching:



‘This was the shot photographer Tony Armstrong-Jones had been waiting for,’ reported the *Daily Express* which published the picture.

Presently, the Aga Khan was back in London and immersed in the preparations for the enthronement ceremonies in Africa and Asia. They were not easy to plan from Europe where the unique status of the Imam among his followers was not readily understood. His reconnaissance had convinced Karim that he ought not to enter the maze of African affairs with its racial, religious, social and political hazards without a professional expert by his side. The need was for an aide-de-camp experienced in political and public relations to cushion him against day to day pressures and interpret him to a world audience attracted by the glamour of the occasion.

One of the friends Princess Joan Aly Khan consulted in her search for a suitable person was Mr Denis C. Hamilton (now Editor-in-Chief of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*) who suggested Michael Curtis, a former Editor of the liberal *News Chronicle*, as the man best equipped to fill such a post. Curtis was invited to meet Prince Karim at his mother’s house where they discussed the tour over lunch; press relations, the drafting of speeches, the programme, all that would fall into the aide’s province. The Aga Khan was impressed and arrangements for Curtis to join him were quickly completed.

Travelling in a chartered aircraft, the party, including Aly and Joan, left London on October 16, 1957. Most of the flight was taken up by discussions about technical and political problems. After a brief stop in Nairobi, they went on to Dar-es-Salaam, where a tremendous reception awaited them. The evening was spent preparing next day’s elaborate programme—Flag March of Ismailis from Jamatkhana to Upanga ceremonial area; Informal Drive through the city; Procession of decorated floats; Meeting with Ismaili Council to discuss enthronement ceremony.

Members of the Council could not agree on the introductory prayer, some plumping for one set of verses, others for a different set, both looking to the Aga Khan for a decision. Though it seemed a small matter, how could he avoid offending half his Council? After listening to the rival arguments, Prince Karim thought for a while, then asked who would do the recitation and was told that a young choir boy from Zanzibar with an excellent voice and bearing



had been chosen. After a brief silence while everybody wondered on whose side the Imam would come down, he announced his verdict which would have done honour to King Solomon: 'Let the choir boy decide what he will sing,' he said amid sighs of relief that he had so deftly avoided giving offence to either side. A buffet supper in his honour at the Mayor's residence concluded the day's proceedings.

The following morning brought a more intractable problem. From Kampala, Sir Frederick Crawford, the British High Commissioner in Uganda, sent word that the Kabaka of Buganda ('King Freddie') had reservations about a ceremony on the same scale as at Dar-es-Salaam. The Kabaka, who was later driven from his country and died in London in 1969 after a miserable existence as a refugee, was still all-powerful in his country and thought that an enthronement at the big Nakivubo Stadium, as envisaged by Ismaili leaders, might be too grandiose an affair and detract from his own dignity. In Uganda, the Kabaka should be the only one to be crowned. Ismaili custom and tradition, however, clearly demanded that the ceremony be attended by the whole community and that the new Aga Khan should literally be seen to succeed.

Anxious to avoid a conflict, the Aga Khan sent Michael Curtis to Uganda to consult the Governor. At Kampala, Curtis contacted Sir Frederick Crawford and the head of the Ismaili community and arranged for the three of them to see the Kabaka. It was dark when they arrived at the Winter Palace where they were received with a roll of drums and offered outsize whiskies before being taken into the Kabaka's presence. Aping the aristocratic stutter cultivated by upper class Englishmen, the Kabaka was friendly and apologetic and pretended that the problem was not of his making, that he had been a friend of the late Aga Khan and was on the best of terms with Prince Aly Khan. But as a constitutional monarch he had to submit to the decisions of his cabinet. The best thing was for Curtis to meet the members of his government.

Prime Minister Michael Kintu was in the chair at the cabinet meeting to which Curtis put his case the following morning. He explained the significance of the ceremony and the importance of its public character and answered questions put to him by several ministers. The Prime Minister concluded that there would be no objection to an enthronement in a place of worship and suggested



that it should be held at the Aga Khan Mosque which, since the large grounds could comfortably accommodate the Aga Khan's followers in Kampala, seemed a satisfactory compromise. Curtis was about to rejoin the Aga Khan when confidential information reached him that the cabinet expected the ceremony to take place inside the Mosque and attendance to be restricted to those who could find room within its walls. He put through a call to the Aga Khan in Dar-es-Salaam and had only just finished the conversation when the hotel telephone broke down. To talk to the Prime Minister he had to use a public telephone booth. Uganda was the only country apart from South Africa, he told the Prime Minister angrily, where such a restriction was imposed on the Aga Khan. After a long and heated discussion, the Prime Minister agreed that the enthronement could take place in the grounds of the mosque after all.

At Dar-es-Salaam, Curtis found the Aga Khan up to his eyes in work—discussion with the Supreme Council, conferences with the British authorities, conversations with envoys from many parts of the world. He was visibly rising to the occasion. The family was with him, including the Begum Aga Khan who was the last to arrive, having stopped off at Mombasa, Tanga and Zanzibar to discuss arrangements for the funeral of her late husband whose final resting place at Aswam was nearing completion.

In the event the Dar-es-Salaam *Takht Nishini* did credit to the devotion and discipline of the Ismailis and established the young Aga Khan as a personality in his own right. His final address, ranging over many subjects beyond religion—because Islam embraces the whole life of the believer—was well argued and well presented. In the spirit of his grandfather, he referred to the new and unbounded sources of energy—atomic energy—released for the use of mankind which would benefit countries like Tanganyika and help to create new towns, railways, factories and promote industrial progress. Once more he promised to devote his life to the community and to guide it in all problems which would arise in the wake of these rapid changes. He believed that education should not stop at the classroom but continue through newspapers, radio, films and television.

The following morning at the *jamaikhana*, the Aga Khan conducted the religious ceremony of *bayat* when nine hundred Ismailis pledged their loyalty. Ten times that number watched his Durbar



when East Africa's leading personalities were presented to him. The leisurely pace of the ancient rites gave way to a burst of speed typical of the Aga Khan's youthful zest. Having taken leave of his followers, a car took him to the airport at over sixty miles an hour. Princess Joan and Michael Curtis joined him for the flight to Nairobi.

On a smaller scale, the Nairobi *Takht Nishini* was a repetition of the Dar-es-Salaam ceremony. In the grounds of the Aga Khan Club the lone figure of the young new leader seated on the throne set high amid his people was strangely appealing. The red robes and gold turbans of the Ismaili dignitaries who invested him with Robe, *Pagri*, Sword, Chain and Ring made a vivid picture such as Kenya had not seen before. The dais, a mass of flowers, red, blue, white and yellow, and the throne, flanked by great vases of roses, stood out against the background of flags fluttering gently in the slight breeze. A thousand people of all races gathered at the social function that evening to greet the Aga Khan who arrived with the Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring. There was dancing to a regimental band and a sumptuous dinner. The Aga Khan was enjoying it and the local society reporters had a field day. They noted that the Kenya establishment was all present and correct.

After the untroubled days in Kenya, the Aga Khan arrived in Uganda in an almost symbolic downpour from dark skies. It did not deter large crowds of Ismailis but formalities at the airport were cut short because of the atrocious weather and the Aga Khan, sheltering under a coloured umbrella, quickly walked past the long line of well-wishers.

The last-minute switch from Nakivubo Stadium to the Aga Khan Mosque complicated technical arrangements but there was no question of curtailing the big programme for the Aga Khan's first day in Uganda, which was fairly typical of his schedule throughout:

- 9 a.m. Leave Government House, Entebbe.
- 9.30 a.m. Arrive at Aga Khan Mosque, Namirembe Road.
- 10.30 a.m. Meeting with Celebration Committee.
- 11 a.m. Visit Aga Khan School, Old Kampala.
- 12.30 p.m. Lunch at Imperial Hotel.
- 2 p.m. Governor's Lodge, Makindye (Rest).
- 4.30 p.m. Civic Garden Party, Jubilee Gardens.



- 6.30 p.m. Celebration Procession.
- 7.20 p.m. Watch Procession from Imperial Hotel.
- 8 p.m. Return to Entebbe with Governor.
- 9 p.m. Dinner at Government House.

Thousands of Ismailis thronged the area around the Mosque in Namirembe Road the following day when the Aga Khan conducted a religious service. During an extensive tour of inspection afterwards he was garlanded and greeted enthusiastically everywhere. Kampala—Ismailis and non-Ismailis alike—was taking the personable young man to its heart. So strong was his personal appeal that the Kabaka decided to attend the enthronement ceremony. For the third time, the Imam was invested with the symbols of his office. Once more he rose to make a speech, touching on a delicate subject without losing his human touch. Obliquely referring to the racial tensions between Africans and Asians in East Africa, he talked about a boxing match between an African and an Asian boy he had been watching at the Aga Khan School the previous day: 'At the end of this sporting event,' he recounted, 'the two boys shook hands and stood together to be photographed. To me this symbolised the partnership between different races which I am convinced is the only condition of peace and prosperity.'

Racial tolerance was his main theme—if the different races in Uganda or anywhere else, for that matter, fell out and quarrelled there would be no confidence, no foreign capital coming in and development and the country's progress slowed down: 'That is why I most strongly urge the Ismaili community to work hand in hand with all other citizens!' Shouts of 'Zindabad' greeted his words, 'Zindabad'—Long Live the Aga Khan! The little argument of a few days earlier was forgotten and the Kabaka gave a cocktail party in his honour. In a truly ecumenical spirit, the Imam of the Shia Ismailis walked under an archway erected by the Sunni Muslim Association—to Muslims of all streams, his elevation was a great occasion.

As the tour neared its end, the pace quickened. So many people wanted to see him, there was so much he wanted to see and hear. Aly worried whether it was not getting too much for this slender young man: 'He saw it through magnificently,' Princess Joan



recalled. She did not have the slightest anxiety: 'Listening to him making his speeches with knowledge, grace and calm,' she said, 'not once were my palms moist. He has a great faculty for acquiring facts, can learn anything, is mad to learn.' His East African speeches were knowledgeable and graceful and confident. He stressed Ismaili interests, bolstered Muslim morale, made donations to many causes—schools, hospitals, mosques. In the words of a Sunni leader (no compliment is more welcome than a rival's) the tour 'filled the minds of Muslims all over the world with fresh hopes and renewed strength to face with confidence the struggles that lie ahead'.

Back in London for a brief rest, the Aga Khan celebrated his twenty-first birthday on December 13, 1957, a family affair but also a holiday for every Ismaili. A delegation representing the Pakistan community came to extend the formal invitation for his Far Eastern tour, and he graciously approved the 'Programme for the Visit of His Royal Highness', submitted by Vazir Ebrahim Manji. The new tour started on January 20, 1958.

First stop and only possible cause for anxiety—though the Aga Khan showed no sign of it—was a brief visit to Damascus to meet Syria's fiery Ismailis. Would they acclaim the young Imam? Would the 'Aly faction' protest? Curtis's instructions were to keep close to the Aga Khan at all times. As soon as the aircraft landed, it was surrounded by the bearded, colourful, strong men of the mountains who pressed forward towards the Imam with a crowd of at least 15,000 closing in behind them. The Aga Khan and Michael Curtis were bodily lifted up and carried shoulder high: 'It was a great emotional upsurge,' Curtis recalled. For a few moments the situation was completely out of hand: 'I had a feeling anything could happen.' But the crowd, though excited and uninhibited, was wholly friendly. In their own exuberant way they showed that they accepted Karim as their leader. When he managed to climb into a car, he stood up and addressed his followers in Arabic. They cheered but calmed down.

The Aga Khan was composed throughout but, said Curtis, it was a great relief to get him back into the aircraft. He was his thoughtful, considerate self. Seeing Curtis hot, battered and dishevelled, he leaned over and whispered: 'You know I don't take alcohol myself but I think you have earned a double Scotch!' Karachi offered a quieter prospect. There was certainly nothing to worry about.



Pakistan was a Muslim country which remembered the old Aga as one of its founders and was happy to receive his grandson.

The full-dress reception reflected the regard in which the Ismaili leader was held. President Iskander, Mirza's military secretary, greeted the Aga Khan and the official welcome party included several members of the Pakistani cabinet. Personal exchanges were drowned in a joyous and exuberant public ovation. Addressing his 'spiritual children' so solemnly that the contrast between the appellation and his youth was hardly apparent, the Imam extended his traditional greeting to the community and pledged himself to help Pakistan to the best of his ability to achieve prosperity and happiness.

Ten years later at the headquarters of the Ismailia Association, the research and ideological centre, I saw, proudly displayed on the wall, the telegram which Imam-e-Zaman had sent 'on the auspicious occasion of the *Takht Nishini* celebrations in Karachi': BEST PATERNAL MATERNAL BLESSINGS ALL SPIRITUAL CHILDREN PAKISTAN OCCASION MY INSTALLATION STOP ASSOCIATION MUST CONTINUE KINDLE FLAMES OF FAITH IN HEARTS OF FUTURE GENERATION—AGA KHAN.

In these days Karachi belonged to the Ismailis. Nearly 20,000 of them from out of town were accommodated in tents in the former Haji Camp, which was bursting at the seams. Some were found room in Ismaili schools or were put up by private families. Their numbers were swelled by a never-ending stream of delegations from twenty countries, among them the United Kingdom, France, Iran, East Africa, Syria, Burma, Ceylon, Goa, Kuwait, Bahrein in the Persian Gulf, Gwadar, South Africa, and Lebanon.

Elaborate plans provided for a hundred thousand people to enter the Stadium by ceremonial gateways over which the Pakistan flag fluttered by the side of the Aga Khan's (green for peace with diagonal red stripe recalling Imam Husayn's sacrifice at Kerbela). For those unable to find a place in the Stadium there would be commentaries in Urdu and English. The day of the ceremony was declared an official half-holiday.

The sound of trumpets heralded the arrival of the Aga Khan by the side of Pakistan's President—Prime Minister Malik Feroz Khan Noon and his cabinet were already in their seats. The brief act of installation was no different from the East African ritual except for the three hundred year old copy of the Holy Koran which was



presented to the Aga Khan, a rare example of Arab calligraphy written in Medina by a Haji from Bokhara.

A relentless programme kept him busy for the next three weeks. He gave talks on Religion and on Africa, visited Peshawar and the Khyber Pass and was ceremonially enthroned for a second time at Dacca, capital of Pakistan's under-privileged eastern wing. On February 15, he returned to Europe: 'You look thinner,' a friend remarked when he saw him in Geneva: 'It was a pretty strenuous tour,' Karim replied. 'Since my grandfather's death I have lost twelve pounds.'

His travels were far from over. Within a month he was back in the sub-continent for his enthronement in Bombay, birthplace of the modern Ismaili community: 'Every able-bodied Ismaili in Bombay,' said the *Times of India*, 'attended the *Takht Nishini* at the Vallabh-bhai Stadium.' The burden of the Aga Khan's speech was that, in secular matters, his Indian followers owed loyalty only to India and its elected government. The speech was well received—and not only by Ismailis. *The Times* thought the occasion lacked the glitter of the late Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee but that 'the sense of loyalty and reverence of the huge crowd was by no means less'. At Delhi, the new Imam met Prime Minister Nehru, who recalled his encounters with the old Aga and wished his successor well.

The new Aga's next destination was the Congo and South Africa—not an easy mission. South Africa was already in the grip of apartheid but the Anglo-Indian prince was given V.I.P. treatment by the government which lifted all colour restrictions for him. Black or white, the crowds loved him and cheered him like a teen-age idol. The circumstances of the Ismaili community in South Africa gave little cause for cheers. He discussed them with the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr T. E. Donges, but the new laws on segregation of non-white businesses dealt a heavy blow to Ismaili traders who were being forced back to the coloured areas. The Aga Khan put the case for his followers forcefully but it was a lost cause. Fortunately, their number was not large and they soon drifted away—to the Congo, to Tanzania, to Kenya, where fellow-Ismailis helped them to make a new start. Only a handful of Ismailis remain in South Africa.

Soon after Prince Karim's stay in Karachi as the personal guest of President Mirza, Prince Aly Khan, in a manner of speaking, re-



turned the hospitality offered to his son. When President Mirza visited Paris at the invitation of President Coty of France, he wanted to stay on privately for a few days and asked Prince Aly Khan to put him up. The President and Madame Mirza, two secretaries, two aides-de-camp, valet, lady's maid, cook, laundry man and various other bodies moved into the house in the Boulevard Maurice Barrès and were soon joined by security men, couriers, chauffeurs and French police who were permanently on duty. There was nothing for Aly and Bettina to do but to move out. As Aly's other houses were also full of people ('as usual' Bettina said), they sought refuge in a friend's flat.

On the day of Mirza's departure, he and Aly lunched with the French President. Leaving the Elysée, Mirza, rather than travel in the official limousine, squeezed into Aly's small car. Escorted by a bevy of motorcycle outriders, Aly drove the President and his wife to the airport. That evening, when he and Bettina were leaving for England and were, as usual, late setting out for the airport, the police motorcycle escort came to their rescue. With sirens screaming, they raced through the crowded streets of Paris at eighty miles an hour to clear the way for Aly's car. They ought to have known better. Aly drove so fast he beat all but two of the police motorcyclists to the airport.

This Paris interlude gave birth to an arrangement which helped to fill the void in Aly's life. The horses, the studs—he bought studs and horses from his father's estate—no longer satisfied his restless search for fulfilment. It was as if the time he had subconsciously expected to devote to the duties of the Imam hung heavily on his hands. Mirza realised that Aly was not his former self, seemed to discover signs of acute depression. He needed something to do: 'You could help my country—our country!' the President suggested. What he had in mind could indeed be useful to Pakistan as well as to Aly. The President offered to appoint him head of the Pakistan delegation to the United Nations and he accepted with alacrity.

Aly's appointment as Pakistan's Ambassador and Envoy Plenipotentiary to the United Nations, when it was announced early in 1958, inevitably provoked a few snide comments. The *Pakistan Times* remarked that diplomatic assignments were too often regarded as sinecures to be distributed among favoured officials, friends and



relations but Prime Minister Malik Firoz Khan Noon assured reporters that Aly would make an ideal diplomat. After a briefing in Karachi, Ambassador Prince Aly Khan travelled to New York. He took an apartment for himself and offices on Sixty-Fifth Street off Fifth Avenue; an American public relations adviser and a Pakistan career diplomat from the Washington Embassy, Mr Agha Shahi, joined his staff. Mr Shahi soon corrected some preconceived notions about his famous chief: 'He sometimes works till ten or twelve at night,' he said, 'and has a very quick grasp of the most complicated subjects. He does not smoke and only drinks tomato juice.'

But it was not easy for Aly to live down his past. When he went to the United Nations to present his credentials to Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, work in the tall skyscraper almost came to a halt because every girl secretary in the building—and not a few of the delegates—posted themselves at vantage points to see him arrive. Those who got a glimpse of him saw an alert and handsome man in a sober dark suit looking sternly ahead of him. The accreditation formalities completed, Aly returned to his office and started work. His first public duty was to give a party on Pakistan's Constitution Day. He invited a thousand people, twice as many turned up. Invitations were sold in the black market and there were many forgeries. But he resisted the blandishment of the New York social set. Anxious to get on with the job and oblivious of the good-humoured wisecracks about 'Aly's forthcoming *maiden* speech', he spent weeks working on the draft of his first address. Over the Transatlantic telephone he told Bettina how much he wanted it to be a success: 'It was so important to him to convince people that he could do something serious,' Bettina said to me. He had to prove himself to the world but he also loved this kind of work, and liked working with his fellow delegates. As always, he was doing things deeply, properly, completely.

For my benefit, Bettina put on a record of his speech and presently Aly's voice filled her Paris apartment: 'Some of the new nations are small,' he was saying with an English upper-class intonation only slightly marred by an accent, 'all of them, in relation to the Great Powers, are weak—geographically, politically and economically. But there is one way in which they are not weak. They are not weak spiritually. They possess the God-given, inexhaustible, spiritual



resources of the individual human soul . . . They are strong in their determination to survive and to succeed.'

What he said about those God-given spiritual resources also seemed to apply to him. For a few minutes Aly lived in this room exactly as he was on that Tuesday, August 19, 1958, when addressing the Third Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly. The impression of his vibrant, captivating personality was so strong that Bettina had tears in her eyes. 'Immediately after making the speech he called me,' she mused, 'he was pleased with the reaction.' He was right to be pleased. Strong applause greeted his words. He was speaking not only for Pakistan but for every small nation. Traditional Ismaili concern for the underdog broke through. Delegates, irrespective of their affiliations, congratulated him. It was on merit that, the following month, he was elected Vice-President of the General Assembly.

His tenure of office coincided with difficult issues. The political situation in the country he represented was rapidly deteriorating. The quarrel over Kashmir divided India and Pakistan but he spoke up courageously, completely disregarding the big stakes his family had in India. The administration he served was under bitter attack in Karachi, accused of corruption and inefficiency. To avoid bloodshed the army's Commander-in-Chief General Ayub Khan assumed control. President Mirza resigned and left for London, where he lived in retirement until his death at the end of 1969.

Ayub made a clean sweep of Pakistan's public life but Aly, who had shown his dexterity on the diplomatic parquet, was retained in office. His stature was visibly growing. Speaking on Disarmament to the Political Committee of the Assembly, he quoted his father's speech of 1932: 'There is a cry going up from the heart of all peace-loving citizens . . . for the security of civil populations against indiscriminate methods of warfare and, above all, for security against the very idea of war.' He was strong on the racial issue and when the Security Council discussed South Africa he gave his listeners an example of Islamic philosophy: 'To hear and to obey is binding so long as one is not commanded to disobey God; when one is commanded to disobey God, he should not hear or obey.'

Emissaries of the Algerian rebels thought Aly might be able to mediate in the conflict with France. They asked to see him and



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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talked with him over lunch. He was European and Oriental at the same time, a Muslim yet steeped in Western culture, one of the few men capable of truly understanding both sides: 'They want me to go and see General de Gaulle as soon as I get back to Paris,' he confided to Bettina. Contact was made through General Catroux but the French President who had returned to office on the issue of 'Algérie française' thought the time was not ripe. Not until Bettina joined Aly in New York did she realise how hard, almost frenziedly, he was working. But he was happy in his new milieu and she thought: 'The nomad has pitched his tent.'



CHAPTER XV

AFTER the burst of publicity about his succession and enthronements, Prince Karim's name began to fade from the news and gossip columns of the western Press of which he had been such a regular if reluctant inhabitant. Instead, Ismaili scholars in Pakistan and East Africa began to chronicle the forty-ninth Imam's every move. The record of his activities followed him from the Congo, South Africa and Portuguese East Africa to Geneva, the Château de l'Horizon, London and Ireland in quick succession. The entry under September 9, 1958 said:

'Arrived for 36 hours' visit in Nairobi and performed the opening ceremony of the Aga Khan Platinum Jubilee Hospital, considered to be among the best hospitals in the world.'

On September 16, 1958, the Aga Khan returned to New York to resume his studies at Harvard University. Virtually the whole family was in the United States. Aly was firmly installed as Pakistan's U.N. envoy, and Sadruddin was back at Harvard where Ameen also continued his studies after the summer vacation: 'Coming back to school, with a year of travel behind me,' Karim said, referring to his enthronement tour with a British sense of understatement, 'I'm driven by a desire to know more. This is a warm and happy place when it is your last year and you know what you want.' He was a first-class student ('I work until around midnight, take a coffee break, then go back and hit the books until two or three'), and a fine sportsman with a will to win ('I can't imagine myself without athletics'). While the newspapers reported Aly's speeches, the Ismaili record of the Aga Khan's progress under October 22, 1958, reads as follows: 'In a football game brought Harvard University victory by scoring two goals, the only player on either side to do so.'



Even so, the Aga Khan's football—and sometimes his studies—could take second place to his community work. Madame Beguel was helping him to deal with the correspondence which was quite as voluminous as his grandfather's had ever been. Michael Curtis was with him to deal with the Press—*Life* photographed him for a cover story and he gave his first television interview to the British Broadcasting Corporation. Although none too enamoured with reporters, the idea of having his own newspaper began to germinate in his mind: 'Grandfather had already considered starting a newspaper in East Africa,' he told Curtis. What Karim had in mind was not an Ismaili newspaper—that would not work. He had been studying East African newspapers, products of colonial rule: 'He thought they were pretty lousy,' Curtis said. What he wanted was a newspaper that was independent and run and operated, in the first instance, by Europeans, until Ismailis and Africans could be trained. As a newspaper it should be capable of standing on its own feet, backed by its own printing works. The plans took on a more definite shape the nearer the Aga Khan approached graduation.

One emotion-charged function lay immediately ahead—grandfather's interment at Aswan Mausoleum. The Begum was at Aswan to supervise the completion of her husband's final resting place but ultimate responsibility for the religious burial rested with Hazar Imam, the Aga Khan. Egyptian authorities waived all formalities for visitors and dealt sympathetically with the requirements of a family whose ancestors ruled their country when it was at the peak of its power. To be closer at hand, Prince Karim interrupted his studies, flew to Europe and watched progress from Geneva.

Questions of etiquette complicated transport to a remote place to which access was precarious at the best of times. The Aga Khan's emissaries watched the water of the Nile with hawk eyes. When it started to fall there was a danger that the flotilla which had been brought from Port Said would be unable to ply between the two banks. A unit of army engineers stood by to throw a bridge across the river in an emergency but in the event the water remained at an adequate level. Accommodation was scarce. The Cataract Hotel's three hundred rooms were reserved for the most eminent mourners, including the Aga Khan. Some of the delegations arriving from the Far East went straight to Aswan, those from East African countries



were flying to Luxor where a special train was waiting to take them on the last stage of their journey. On his way to the funeral, the Aga Khan, coming from Geneva, spent the night at Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo where he found an invitation to see President Nasser the following morning.

The meeting was scheduled to last fifteen minutes but instead of shaking hands formally and exchanging a few polite words, President Nasser drew his visitor into a political discussion which went on for over an hour and a half. The aircraft standing by to take the Aga Khan to Luxor would have missed the special train had the President not sent out instructions for it to wait.

At Aswan, Prince Karim first went to the Begum's house, where the body of his grandfather was lying in state, and discussed with her the next day's funeral arrangements and the part of the mourners in the ceremony. Muslim tradition required it to be an all-male affair with the ladies remaining in the background: 'According to our custom,' said Mr Zulfikarali C. Valiani, who helped to make the arrangements, 'the men would assemble in one tent while the ladies would be in another tent. . . .'

At twelve-thirty p.m. on the day of the funeral, Prince Karim, accompanied by the Mir of Hunza, Sir Eboo Pirbhai, Mr Amirali Fancy and other Ismaili dignitaries, went to the local mosque for Friday prayers. The funeral procession formed at three p.m. In Aly's absence, the three nearest male relatives—Karim, Amyn, Sadruddin—and the late Aga's long-serving old valet, Solomon Bandely, carried the coffin on the last stage to the fortress-like Mausoleum on the hill overlooking the Nile. As the procession passed the ladies' tent, the Begum emerged. Dressed in a white sari and accompanied by a friend and a maid, she followed the cortège, a break with Muslim custom. The young Imam showed no sign of his disapproval, and did not utter a word. But when the funeral was over, the coolness between him and the Begum was evident. The Imam of the time had been publicly defied by the widow of his predecessor. The incident caused a rift which was not healed for several years. It certainly put an end to any notion of Prince Karim accepting guidance from the Begum—or anyone else for that matter. He was Imam in his own right.

As if to underline her own right, the Begum at the head of a large



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retinue of women paid another visit to the Mausoleum a few weeks later. To reporters she talked with some bitterness about the Aswan incident: 'Prince Karim did not want me to follow the procession on the grounds of Ismaili rites,' she said. 'If I went to the Mausoleum contrary to his wishes, it was only because I was tired and did not want to wait for hours in the gilded armchair in which I was to sit.' Members of her late husband's family, she added, did not speak to her and left the day after the ceremony without taking leave of her: 'I know that Prince Karim does not have the slightest intention of following his grandfather's wishes so far as I am concerned . . .' Ten years later, when I mentioned the incident, the Aga Khan dismissed it as a minor misunderstanding about religious etiquette which was best forgotten: 'The Begum is European . . .' was all he said by way of explanation.

In the States and in Europe Karim kept in close touch with his father, followed his diplomatic career with filial loyalty but still could not share his abiding interest in racing: 'I do not like to talk about horses with you,' Bettina once heard him tell Aly—he did not want to talk about a subject of which he knew so little. It was a subject on which Aly had much to say just then. After months of absorbing diplomatic work, his racing interests were given a strong fillip by the spectacular success of a typical product of his stable's breeding theories: Petite Etoile, the brilliant daughter (1956) of Star of Iran and Petition, who, after a very good season as a two-year-old, went on to even greater things in 1959, winning the Thousand Guineas at Newmarket—when Tabroun won the Two Thousand Guineas, Aly completed a rare double—and following it up with successes in the Oaks at Epsom, the Yorkshire Oaks, the Sussex and the Champion Stakes.

To mark the end of his studies and his impending graduation, 'K. Khan' donated fifty thousand dollars to Harvard University for scholarships to Muslim students. Leaving Harvard meant an instant translation from youth to heavy responsibility. Age would not wither him for many a decade but the life that awaited him demanded a very mature approach. The formal award of his Bachelor of Arts degree with Honours in History reached him on July 11, the second anniversary of his Imamate, which he celebrated with the London *jamat*. Without giving himself much respite, he travelled to the only



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corner of his world-wide parish where he was still vulnerable as a religious leader and where his rule as Imam had been seriously challenged. In Syria he found an involved situation in which one section of Ismailis was still at odds with the other but he was well received and his donation of £10,000 to Damascus University was much appreciated.

In August he enjoyed his father's hospitality at the Château de l'Horizon for a pleasant, uninhibited holiday. It looked as if Aly and Bettina might be married before long and Bettina certainly hoped they would but Aly was still on the move and Karim had the château much to himself. It was there that the prying long-focus lenses of magazine photographers, French, Italian, American, discovered him lazing on the beach, his head in the lap of a pretty girl who was soon identified as Annouchka von Meks, daughter of a German-born father with business interests in Paris. It was the beginning of a relentless pursuit, with Karim and Annouchka, sometimes protected by bodyguards, only just one step ahead of the reporters. It went on for years. Somehow, the Press was convinced that Annouchka would be the next Begum: 'Such is the power of the popular Press,' Karim said in an address to the Royal Commonwealth Society at Oxford, a little later, 'that few people know very much about the Ismailis today, except that the Aga Khan is their leader, is weighed in diamonds from time to time, owns a number of race-horses, and (so far as I am concerned at any rate) appears to be perpetually on the brink of matrimony.'

The tour on which he set out in mid-September enabled him to become more intimately acquainted with his community. He went to East Africa for a whole month and was received with great ceremonial and genuine warmth. He opened a mosque on the outskirts of Kampala and laid several foundation stones, one for a housing scheme in Nairobi, another for a nursery school in Mombasa. His meetings with the leaders were the most significant of his tenure so far. Imposing figures, venerable men with great authority among their people, they were rooted in his grandfather's reign—Count Verjee from Uganda, Count Abdullah from Dar-es-Salaam (both of whom have since died), Count Lakha, Count Fatehali Dhala and Sir Eboo Pirbhai. Attuned to the old Aga's way of thinking and conducting the affairs of the community like a monarch—running it



with his nose, as someone said, but without organisation—they were not automatic supporters of the modernisation measures which the new Imam came to introduce.

His grandfather's spirit pervaded everything. What he had done, how he had done it, was Ismaili legend. But while the previous Aga Khan had been able to set up an Ismaili dressmaker in business with a few private recommendations, 1960 demanded a more sophisticated approach to the community's economic problems. The institutions around which Ismaili business life revolved, the Diamond Jubilee Trust and the Jubilee Insurance Company, were obviously in need of reorganisation.

Though perfectly sound financially, the Diamond Jubilee Invest-Trust was just then suffering from a shortage of liquidity and the Ismaili managers, as was the custom in his grandfather's time, looked to the Aga Khan for a remedy. Groping in the jungle of his new responsibilities, uncertain where to find sound advice on so complicated a matter, he was suddenly faced with a request for £300,000. It was a big decision for him to make but he provided the money from his own funds. They were ample. Community contributions amounted to a small fortune but community requirements were not far behind. Still, there was plenty left and, continuing on the well-trodden path of traditional Aga Khan munificence, he gave £50,000 to Teheran University and £1,500 to the Kenya Olympic Association—to mention only two of many donations.

Aly, too, was busy and mobile. At Karachi, he saw President Ayub Khan, who appointed him Ambassador to Buenos Aires, an exciting prospect. He looked forward to taking up his duties in mid-May, made a hurried trip to New York to wind up his affairs, and flew on to London before returning to Paris. His house was a beehive of activity. The racing season was at hand and stud managers, trainers, racing friends went in and out. Aly was dashing from Chantilly to St Crespin, from one stable to the other, talking to Alec Head, to jockeys, lads and weather men. Having seen so little of him since his U.N. appointment, Bettina tried to coax him into a more sociable life but it was hard going.

Early morning on May 12, 1960, he still had not made up his mind whether to accept a long-standing invitation to dinner at the house of André Dubonnet's daughter Lorraine Bonnet and her



husband at Marnes-la-Coquette. Stavros and Genie Niarchos and two of the French Rothschilds and their wives would be among the guests. All right, Aly told Bettina, they would be going too. She spent the day as usual, saw to the house and the dogs in the morning, walked in the garden and went to the hairdresser, having her hair done in a new page-boy style. Aly went racing at Longchamps, stopped over at his club to play a few rubbers of bridge and was late arriving home, as usual, by which time Bettina was dressed and ready to go.

Several people were still waiting to talk to Aly, he wanted to make a few telephone calls and dictate letters to Felix Bigio. When Bettina put her head round the door he was discussing the Grand Prix dinner several weeks hence. By ten p.m. the Bonnets phoned to inquire whether he would be coming at all and he sent word that he would be there presently. He was still in his study, just beginning to shave and change, but told Lucien, the chauffeur, to get the car ready. Fixing his tie as he went, he rushed downstairs and out into the street so fast, Bettina had difficulty keeping up with him.

The Lancia was 'on approval' and Aly took the wheel for the first time. Bettina slipped into the seat beside him and Lucien sat behind them. The car went beautifully, Aly was enjoying the drive and told Lucien that he had decided to buy it. Approaching St Cloud, they turned into the wide Carrefour du Val d'Or and were going up hill when Bettina was blinded by the headlights of an oncoming car: 'Mind!' she shouted but remembers nothing of what happened next until she found herself standing in the road without shoes, 'the terrible sound of shattering glass and rending steel, that excruciating whistle' still in her ears. Aly had been overtaking a little Renault which was dawdling along when a yellow car coming from the opposite direction crashed head-on into the Lancia. The car's driver, Lucien, and Bettina were only slightly injured. Bettina could see Aly, motionless, his head over the steering wheel and a few drops of blood on his forehead. She was only half-conscious: 'What about Aly?' she shrieked but in her heart she knew that he was dead.

A police van took her to hospital where a cut on her forehead was stitched. She was suffering from severe shock. The Bonnets were informed, their dinner party broke up and Baron Elie de Rothschild came to look after Bettina, who was given sedatives before being



taken to the Boulevard Maurice Barrès. She remembers waking up in her own bed but had no idea whether she had been asleep for three hours or three days. Her mother, her sister and the Begum Aga Khan were with her but the one person she wanted to see was Karim and his arrival brought her comfort: 'It was a bit like having Aly there,' she said.

Karim was deeply shaken. Remarkable though his composure was under the stress of his official duties, now he only kept it with difficulty: 'What a terrible thing,' he said gravely. 'Terrible for you, and terrible for me. I have lost my grandfather and my father in so brief a space . . . I am alone now.' Gently, he took Bettina's hand and she, in her own grief, wanted to console him. Aly's body was brought to the house and Bettina spent the night on a sofa beside him, her hand on his arm. How relaxed he looked, almost smiling. The next morning, Ismaili ritual took over, the body was embalmed, Imams from the Paris Mosque came to say their prayers, flowers arrived and the house was filled with mourners.

Aly had expressed the wish to be buried at Salamiya among Syria's Ismailis he knew and loved so well. In the meantime he was to be interred in the grounds of the Château de l'Horizon where a grave was dug in the lawn by the side of his study. Starting on the sad journey to the South of France, chanting and praying Ismailis carried the coffin which was covered with the red and green Ismaili flag and put it on a special train. In the coach ahead, Bettina joined Karim, Aryn and Sadruddin in their compartment. Regular trains taking precedence, the trip took twelve hours and it was midnight before they arrived. Next day the body was lying in state, crowds gathered outside the château and the policeman trying to keep them at a distance was killed by a passing train.

At the open grave, Karim, palms turned skywards, recited the funeral prayers. Then Aly was put to rest in the temporary grave. 'Temporary' turned out to be a very long time. The Joundas who held power in Syria (one Jounda was head of the trade unions, another ambassador in Paris, though he later fell from grace) were descendants of a family which had seceded from the Ismaili sect at the turn of the century. Arab quarrels being 'hereditary', permission for Aly's body to be buried in Syria was withheld and ten years after his death it is still in the grounds of l'Horizon. Recognition of his



ability which was given only grudgingly in his lifetime, was general and genuine: 'Pakistan has lost a diplomat of the highest calibre and value,' said President Ayub Khan, and Britain's U.N. envoy Sir Pierson Dixon was one of many prominent people who paid tribute to him. Racing men all over the world were shocked by the tragic death of this flamboyant and generous sportsman. Years later I talked to Bettina about him: 'I'll never find another Aly,' she said. There will never be another Aly.

Bettina was amply provided for in Aly's Will, the provisions of which were carried out by Maître André Ardoin, the family's legal adviser. Friends and associates received legacies but the bulk of Aly's property, much of it inherited from his own father, came down to Karim with Amyn and Yasmin sharing in the estate. Land in Pakistan, shares in American oil companies, East Pakistan jute production, houses in Paris, Cannes, Deauville, Chantilly, residences in the Far East (such as Yarovda Palace in Poona), the bungalow in Nairobi where he spent the first few years of his life were now his own. Geneva was the capital of his industrial empire. In place of Villa Barakat, which was bought by Baron Edouard de Rothschild (but has since passed into other hands), the Aga Khan acquired 'Miremont', a fine house on the outskirts of Geneva, as a residence and an office. 'Daranoor', the chalet standing in its own grounds in Gstaad, became his winter H.Q. until he sold it to the German publisher Axel Springer in 1968 and moved to St Moritz. 'Tekri' (Honeymoon Lodge) in Karachi also became his property. With much of the furniture dating back to the old Aga's childhood not even the use of the house as a convalescent home could banish his atmosphere.

An important asset which became Prince Karim's concern from now on were the stud farms and stables in France and Ireland and the famous string of horses carrying the Aga Khan's colours: 'What am I going to do with the horses?' he asked Maître Ardoin. 'You may not be interested now,' Ardoin suggested, 'because you are not an expert, but one day, who knows?' There was no need to remind him of the unique racing tradition associated with his name. He was still pondering the matter when the stables came up with a series of spectacular successes. Having won the previous year's Prix Saint Patrick and two recent Longchamps races as a three-year-old, Charlottesville ran away with the Prix du Jockey Club, the French



Derby (and 341,958 francs), won the Grand Prix de Paris (404,814 francs) and the Prix du Prince d'Orange (31,075 francs), bringing his total stakes to over £74,000. The colt was still full of running and had a great career at stud ahead of him. Sheshoon won the Gold Cup at Ascot, the Grand Prix of Baden Baden and the Grand Prix at Saint Cloud. Everything was winning.

The Aga Khan's interest was aroused. He went to visit the stables and stud farms—Marly-le-Ville, where Madame Vuillier was in residence, Lassay which became the headquarters of Robert Muller and St Crespin with Shaumiers, the charming Norman-style cottage '*sans téléphone*' to which he later occasionally retreated for a few days. The seven Irish stud farms were not doing badly either: 'I shall carry on,' Prince Karim decided. He asked Ardoin to look after the establishment until he could learn a little more about racing. Eventually he would rationalise, sell some horses and studs and, if necessary, buy others—he at once bought the share of the studs and the horses which had come down to Aryn, Yasmin and Bettina in his father's estate. Studs and stables would have to be run as a business. He called Madame Vuillier, Robert Muller and Major Hall to a conference with Maître Ardoin to tell them of his decision.

He was learning about all sorts of things. When talking to his half-brother Patrick Guinness, the subject of the Italian island of Sardinia cropped up. Patrick was very enthusiastic, described it as a Mediterranean paradise virtually untouched by the crowds of holidaymakers who invaded every coastline in Europe, a haven of privacy and, with only minor corrections, an ideal refuge for private yachts—Karim, who had inherited his father's handsome yacht, *My Love*, pricked up his ears. He went to see for himself and told Prince Sadruddin and Maître Ardoin about his excursion. John Duncan Miller of the World Bank, and other friends, were brought in and began to plan a sanctuary where they could enjoy sun and solitude in a beautiful natural setting. They decided to form a consortium to acquire land in Sardinia and build villas for themselves and a small circle of congenial acquaintances, create a harbour and turn their little corner of the island into a private resort of like-minded people, or rather like-minded owners of private yachts.

For the moment, however, the Aga Khan had to concentrate on Pakistan where he was heading in September 1960 for a forty-days'



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The new Aga Khan assumes his robe of office at his installation at Dar-es-Salaam on October 19th, 1957. (Paul Popper)

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Yvette Aga Khan at 'Yakimour'. (Camera Press)



Aerial view of the late Aly Khan's villa, the Château de l'Horizon, near Cannes.

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tour to acquaint himself with the country and the community as thoroughly as he had done in East Africa a few months earlier. A back-breaking official programme was mapped out for him but the crowded record says nothing about the conferences and conversations which went on deep into the night. What he did affected the lives of thousands. He approved plans for Karimabad, the first Ismaili housing project named after him. It was designed to give eight hundred families two-room apartments costing 10,000 rupees each to be paid in monthly instalments of thirty-five rupees, less than a tenth of the average income in Pakistan. When completed, it provided homes for people who were living in mud huts, if not in the streets.

At Malik suburb he laid the foundation stone of another typical Ismaili enterprise and met the woman who had made it possible, Mrs Puranbhai, a widow, who had given the community a piece of land worth £20,000 she had inherited. Work soon started on 'Mohammedi Girls Academy', the most luxurious orphanage in the world, not inferior in living accommodation and teaching facilities to the finest English and American public schools. Mrs Puranbhai herself preferred to stay on in the hut in which she lived and continue to pick vegetables at a pay of five shillings a day: 'I am happier that way,' she told me. As with most similar projects, patrons—Ismailis and non-Ismailis—contributed generously to the cost. In the case of the Academy, they raised 1.2 million rupees.

For Prince Karim this was only a beginning. So impatient was he to launch other new schemes that he pressed the Ismaili Council to submit suggestions: 'Can't we set up an industry?' he asked Amirali Fancy. The difficulty, Fancy countered, was foreign exchange of which Pakistan was desperately short: 'I shall provide £200,000 in foreign exchange,' the Aga Khan said. 'I want to use as much as possible of my money for the benefit of the community.' He was not as yet married, he remarked, his expenses were much smaller than his grandfather's. Prince Karim's foreign exchange made it possible to import machinery for two textile factories and to buy fifty auto-rickshaws to be leased to Ismailis. The rest went towards equipment for a canvas factory, the profit of which was used to maintain the Girls Academy.

The Aga Khan's spending spree continued. At a formal ceremony,



Pakistan's Education Minister took over the new Aga Khan School, built by the community at a cost of 600,000 rupees. He laid the foundation stone of a Technical High School, sponsored by the Aga Khan III Foundation, and opened the Prince Aly Khan Boys Academy of the Ismailia Youth Services. A donation from him enabled Karachi University to start a Prince Aly Khan Library. He approved plans for a huge new *jamatkhana* to be built in the Garden district of Karachi. Wherever he went in his special train he found worthy causes to support.

He made speeches, opened *jamatkhanas*, and blessed the faithful who swarmed around him. They besieged him with requests and fought to touch his clothes and kiss his hands. Three secretaries were kept busy typing his messages which helped followers to solve some of their problems. He could be stern, too. Visiting an Ismaili family in their home, he sensed that the woman was reluctant to show him one of the rooms but he insisted. Seeing four children sleeping on the floor, he reproved the woman and gave her a lecture on hygiene—it was unhealthy to sleep on the floor, never mind whether it had been the community's practice for generations. Through his *vazirs* he told the community to switch from shop-keeping to small industry, the professions and the civil service. His ambition was a house for every Ismaili family. In East Africa, Ismaili schools and hospitals were open to all and he urged the community here in Pakistan 'to open up a bit'. He travelled north as far as Gilgit, then switched to a jeep for the last seventy miles of mule track to Hunza, the first Imam to visit the remote Ismaili Shangri-La in the fourteen-hundred-years history of the sect.

Conditions in East Pakistan were far from idyllic. In Khulna there were poverty and starvation: 'My spiritual children in Khulna are in great difficulty,' the Aga Khan told Amirali Fancy, 'something must be done for them.' Fancy travelled to Khulna and arranged for the Jubilee Finance Corporation to provide funds for local Ismailis to launch a co-operative society. When he paid them another visit two years later they were already much better off. By the mid-sixties they were thriving.

Towards the end of the fifteen-thousand-mile tour—the total mileage he covered in the first three years of his Imamate was 260,000—even the athletic young Harvard man's energies were



beginning to flag. He still allowed himself no rest. Back in London, he discussed the East African newspaper project with Michael Curtis, whom he recalled to launch it. Referring to the famous speech by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan which set the African continent alight, Curtis said: 'We blew in with the wind of change. The Aga Khan felt that this was something that should not be resisted, on the contrary, should be helped along . . .' Unlike the colonial newspapers, the Aga Khan's would devote space to African politics, print what African politicians had to say—and not, as hitherto, at the bottom of the page. He was prepared to invest one million pounds sterling, wanted the paper to support the British government's progressive move towards independence and to advocate the release of Kenyatta who was serving a six-year jail sentence as leader of Mau Mau, the extremist East African liberation movement.

Curtis went to Nairobi and prepared the publication of the *Sunday Nation* but it was an up-hill struggle and there were many pitfalls. As a former London Editor, he favoured an up-to-date slick Fleet Street style which his African readers did not seem to like. The *Sunday* paper was followed by the *Daily Nation* which did not prosper because many Asians, accustomed to offering their wares in the market place, did not believe in advertising. The papers were devouring money at an alarming rate and progress was slow, a depressing thought for the young Aga Khan who was convinced of the importance and the viability of his newspaper project. He was proved right when, in the passage of time, they made a great deal of money for him and became the biggest-circulation English newspapers in East Africa.

He was at Chalet Daranoor in Gstaad pondering the problem—and many others. Three times a day he prayed (unlike Sunnis who pray five times) seeking guidance from Allah. The community weighed on his mind. The community was his life: 'Do you know what thrills me—what really thrills me?' he asked Vincent Mulchrone, who interviewed him for the London *Daily Mail*, and answered his own question: 'Well, I believe the community's secondary schools in Dar-es-Salaam and Kampala had the highest pass rate in school certificates in any Asian school in East Africa.' He was following a hard routine, getting up at seven-thirty a.m.,



putting in three hours' work before going out ski-ing for a few hours. Then he returned to his desk and to the reports and personal messages from his followers in East Africa which only reinforced his view that the community's economic structure was woefully inadequate and that reorganisation ought not to be delayed. Ismaili traders had gone into industry but could not make a success of their ventures. Some went broke and asked the Imam for advice and help. It was not a healthy situation.

What was urgently required was a thorough investigation by experienced industrial consultants. The choice was not easy. An American firm would regard the state of the community's economic development as not far enough advanced for them. English or French experts might be associated with colonial rule which was discredited and coming to an end. The Germans were the best bet because they had themselves started from zero after the war. The final choice fell on a German firm, Kienbaum Unternehmensberatung, with offices at Gummersbach near Cologne.

A meeting with the head of the firm, Herr Gerhard Kienbaum, was fixed for the earliest date after the Aga Khan's trip to the United States, in the course of which he paid a visit to the White House. President John F. Kennedy found the young Ismaili leader with the Harvard background a most congenial partner. They discussed world affairs, Africa's emancipation—a wide *tour d'horizon*. Reports of the meeting were only just coming through when the Aga Khan was already in Nairobi addressing one gathering on the multi-racial society and another on the British Commonwealth. He flew to Europe to preside over a World conference of the presidents of Ismailia Associations—Muslim historians, theologians, scientists—whom he had invited to the Château de l'Horizon.

His meetings with Gerhard Kienbaum took place in Switzerland not much later: 'On September 15, 1961,' Kienbaum noted, 'His Highness the Aga Khan Karim al-Husseini entrusted me with a study of the economic situation of the Ismaili community in East Africa . . .' A fee of £5,000 plus expenses was agreed. The first of Herr Kienbaum's staff to hear of the new assignment was Dr Peter Hengel, a young German graduate of the Maxwell School of Economics and Political Science at the University of Syracuse with some industrial experience in the United States: 'We rushed to the



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reference books to see what it was all about,' was how he described the reaction at Gummersbach. 'Of course we knew the name of the Aga Khan but he was less of a public figure in Germany than in Britain and the United States . . . We did not even know how to address him.'

At Kienbaum's all available literature about economic conditions in East Africa was closely studied: 'The Aga Khan foresaw considerable changes,' Dr Hengel recalled. 'The end of colonial rule was in sight and he wanted to have a blueprint ready to integrate his plans into the future economic and political pattern.' Sir Eboo Pirbhai was present at the discussions and prepared a schedule for a Kienbaum team to tour East Africa to investigate the business activities of the community.



CHAPTER XVI

THE Aga Khan happened to be in Nairobi in December 1961 when Dr Hengel and two of his colleagues started their investigation. He was the guest of honour at a party in the attractive house of his Education Administrator Jimmy Verjee to which Hengel was also invited. Hengel thought his firm's new client was rather solemn and risked a little joke which made the Aga Khan laugh and broke the ice. This informality, he says, has remained a characteristic of their relationship.

The Kienbaum team travelled all over East Africa to meet community leaders and businessmen: 'We were struck by the intense religious feeling of the community, which was very well organised as a body,' Hengel said. His strongest impression was of Ismaili dedication and discipline, their economic committees, education committees, women's committees, youth committees, health and hospital committees which enabled them to be active in many fields.

But economically, when seen with the eyes of a West European industrial expert, the community looked extremely vulnerable. It concentrated almost exclusively on trade. Many were selling the same lines and everybody was in the wholesale business which, once East African states became independent, might well be nationalised. Indigenous Africans might be put in charge and non-African retailers denied licences to trade—a most unfavourable position to be in. To Hengel the community seemed industrially in the same position as the Germans were in 1945—at zero. How to introduce diversification and finance it were the two principal problems on which Hengel's study concentrated: 'Admirable as they were for an earlier phase of development,' he said, 'Ismaili institutions were not equipped for the task.'



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Kienbaum's preliminary report persuaded the Aga Khan to commission further investigations specifically into the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust, the Jubilee Insurance and the newspaper group. The Trust, started with the old Aga Khan's donation, now had four thousand Ismaili shareholders, dispensed loans at three per cent over twenty years—not a commercial proposition—and was run on a personal basis. The Kienbaum study suggested reform of the management and diversion of finance towards industrial ventures; borrowers should be advised on how best to manage their own enterprises.

In the view of the investigators, the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust's management left much to be desired; the company was not looking beyond the community and was not really equipped to handle industrial investment and loans. It supported little lending agencies in small villages which accepted trinkets and all manner of things no bank would regard as security. They lent money to small traders to buy stock or to finance a trip abroad, repayments by instalments, but were no longer adequate to the needs of the community. The newspaper group was losing money though this was the Aga Khan's personal property and not an Ismaili enterprise. Total assets under review were in the region of £30 million which was what the community was worth.

The study looked into consumer industries capable of replacing imports and into local products suitable for export. It suggested the size of individual enterprises to give them the best chance of success and how Ismaili firms could avoid competing against each other or duplicating efforts—with the White Highlands still an exclusively European domain, agriculture was closed to Ismailis but after independence the Aga Khan did advise his people to go into farming. What these findings suggested to him was the need for an entirely new approach: 'As you will have heard,' he said to me, 'when it became essential to go into industry, I founded the I.P.S. (Industrial Promotion Services). These institutions—in East Africa and elsewhere—had to be evolved jointly between the Imam and the leadership of the community'—a tactful reference to the early sixties and the reorganisation which transformed the economic life of East African Ismailis. There was no set formula, he said, and the concept had to be flexible because the community was spread over so



many countries with different conditions and different laws.

To make it palatable to the old guard was not easy because it was bound to reduce their personal influence. Privilege, nepotism, patronage were liable to be eliminated. Religious and economic life being so closely intertwined in Islam, the Aga Khan could have used his religious authority and imposed the new order with a firman. He preferred his leaders to understand what he was doing and to accept the changes of their own free will. A younger generation was standing in the wings to take over before long, mostly products of the old Aga Khan's educational programme with university education in Pakistan, the United States, Britain and France.

In the event economic changes went hand in hand with changes in the community's leadership. The Aga Khan's Industrial Promotion Services were staffed with young graduates capable of giving expert advice on a wide variety of projects. The leisurely community so deeply rooted in the past was transformed into a beehive of activity. Market surveys, feasibility studies, legal opinions took the place of friendly pow-wows. To bring the rank and file into the process, Dr Hengel travelled up and down the country inviting anyone with an industrial idea to come forward and explain what could be done and what was viable. Occasionally the result was a head-on clash with a different age. One man thought his bag of sand was all he needed to start a glass industry, another asked earnestly: 'How much does the industry cost?' But before long the new idea took on flesh, the organisations were infused with a life of their own and ceased to be restricted to the community. They became enterprises capable of growth and development independent of religious matters.

For the Aga Khan every single move in this intricate process involved unending conferences. Like his grandfather, he kept on asking questions, analysed the answers carefully. So many vested interests were involved and not always openly declared, he went to the bottom of every argument and his associates came to respect his ability—as one of them described it—'to read the back of another man's mind'.

'Sometimes it is uncanny—a sixth sense,' I was told. His European business friends echoed this assessment: 'He is a perfectionist,' they said with convincing unanimity, 'checks every angle and counter-



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checks. It's an intellectual process with an instinct for self-protection. He is naturally suspicious!' He also began to rely on a closely-knit information system to bring him news from every corner of the world enabling him to co-ordinate activities in several continents—in the community, the Imam alone has an overall view of his widely dispersed followers. Once in possession of all available information, it was his habit to consult his advisers and to toss a project back and forth—'ping-ponging', as he called it—bringing others into the game as required until a decision evolved. He insisted on staying with each project from the beginning to the end, keeping *au fait* on every aspect of significance.

His friends thought he was doing far too much and ought to delegate more. His insistence on top standards slowed them down. There was always another point to be considered until he pushed a matter right up to the edge of perfection. When work threatened to overwhelm him, some community leaders—Amirali Fancy of Pakistan foremost among them—urged him earnestly to take things easier. On Fancy's suggestion it was agreed to make February a closed season as far as the Imam was concerned. No communications from the community, no inquiries, no demands for decisions. The Aga Khan appreciated the thought but the result was that work piled up and the burden was nearly doubled in March and April.

Throughout, though, he remained even-tempered. He was careful not to offend susceptibilities, rewarded loyalty with consideration of everybody's feelings. He rarely gave a negative answer—instead of saying 'No' he simply did not deal with the matter at all. What did make him angry were attempts to pressurise him. People who insisted on seeing him against his wishes usually regretted it when they succeeded. Sloppy work infuriated him but he managed to be angry without raising his voice.

When his time was not taken up with discussions and conferences, he was dealing with his growing correspondence. He answered hundreds of questions from bewildered followers, reassured old faithfuls, briefed young leaders and adapted the western-inspired approach to African realities. The constantly changing political situation demanded modifications at every stage and created new problems. The whole formidable undertaking tied this deceptively humble, twenty-six-year-old religious leader and tycoon to his desk



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for ten hours a day or more. The iron discipline which is a facet of his character alone enabled him to pursue his sport throughout. For outsiders it was impossible to visualise the extent of his responsibilities when they saw him on the snow-covered slopes of Gstaad or on the difficult ski-runs of St Moritz, even less when he presented himself as a competitor in the hotly contested 'Roberts of Kandahar Challenge Cup' at Davos, the oldest in the world for downhill ski-racing—and won it.

In the course of a quick visit to Paris he inspected an eleventh-century mansion in the narrow rue des Ursins in the Ile de la Cité, once part of the Notre Dame complex and residence of the cathedral's canons, later the home of French Finance Minister Count Orsini. Lavishly restored by a famous Paris architect not many years earlier, it came on the market when the owner became involved in a much-publicised affair. The Aga Khan liked it and bought it but the figure of £1 million which was mentioned as the purchasing price was grossly exaggerated. The house became his favourite residence in Europe and was conveniently near his racing interests which gravitated towards France. In the course of rationalisation he sold three of his stud farms, Eyrefield, Ongar and La Coquenne.

Wherever he was, reports about the community's affairs pursued him. He dictated his answers on tapes to be transcribed but later rarely travelled without two or three secretaries. Pakistan just then signalled splendid progress of the Ismaili co-operative societies, which eventually numbered ninety-five. In line with his policy of giving younger men positions of authority in the community he appointed Badaruddin Pirbhai, Sir Eboo's son, who was practising law in London, President of the Ismailia Council of Great Britain. He was one of the select few who were being drawn into the closest circle around the Imam.

Although never talked about, initiation was still practised and certain groups inside the Ismaili community were not, still are not, open to all. In the esoteric Ismaili faith, a man born into the religion does not automatically reach the highest state of religious comprehension but may advance towards it—or be initiated—stage by stage. The Aga Khan was reticent when I asked him about it. It was a degree of involvement, he said: 'Those who wish to participate in a more formal manner,' he expressed himself a little mysteriously,

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‘can do so but the opportunity for such personal spiritual involvement is not always available to other sections of the community.’

Initiation does not involve any mystical mumbo jumbo. In fact, at this time, the Imam, in consultation with community leaders, completed the modernisation of the Ismaili Constitution. When sanctioning the new version, he told his followers: ‘Look to the spirit and not the letter of the Constitution.’

The Sardinian project, conceived as a rich man’s hobby, was developing into a commercial proposition of some magnitude. With half-brother Patrick Guinness, Uncle Sadruddin (whose marriage to Nina Dyer had just been dissolved), lawyer Ardoin, industrialists Miller and Mentasti (an Italian mineral water tycoon) and some other wealthy businessmen, the Aga Khan formed a consortium to buy up land in the deserted north-east corner of the island. There was much bargaining, manœuvring, surveying and patchwork to fit the pieces together. The first few lots went cheaply but the Sardinian peasants who owned the land soon raised the stakes and prospered beyond their wildest dreams. Bit by bit, thirty-five miles of unspoilt coastline were acquired including some thirty-two thousand acres of land. Costa Smeralda was the ingenious euphonic name dreamed up for the territory which became also known as ‘Agaland’ or ‘the Aga Khan’s answer to Spain’s Costa del Sol’.

The possibilities of this wild, sun-stroked, beautiful enclave grew with familiarity. Before long there was talk—and decisions—about a total investment of £30 million, though the Aga Khan’s share was only a fraction of this amount. Work was put in hand on a vast infra-structure of roads and drainage, water and power supply, airfields, harbours, hotels and a colony of villas for wealthy people prepared to conform to the high standard laid down by the consortium. A Comité de Direction, headed by the Aga Khan, met for one week every month and ran the whole scheme. With some difficulty, the Italian government was persuaded to co-operate in the project from which the country’s exchequer profited long before the Aga Khan and his friends could hope to break even.

Charming villages grouped around piazzas with shops, cafés, and discothèques in native style were conjured up and Porto Cervo became the nerve centre of Agaland. The consortium’s own airline, Alisarda, began to fly in visitors throughout a season lasting longer



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than in most rival resorts. Villas, designed by prominent international architects to many tastes (as long as they blended in with the landscape), grew up within the strict limits of a population density of five per acre. The whole was nursed by Prince Karim's commercial talent and ingeniously publicised with his counter-productive Garbo-like craving for privacy which turned 'spotting the Aga Khan' into one of the Costa Smeralda's major attractions. Most summers Princess Margaret of Britain and other notable friends, a couple of Rockefellers among them, came to visit him. Bettina acquired a charming villa on the island—another attraction. Rita Hayworth brought Yasmin and stayed to enjoy the sun. The Aga Khan's mother and her relatives became regulars. International business associates and Ismaili community leaders started flying in and out.

Maître Ardoin bought a villa near Porto Cervo, an investment as profitable as it is pleasurable; so did Dr Peter Hengel who, predictably, left Kienbaum by friendly arrangement and joined the Aga Khan's organisation. While it remained the chief objective to promote Sardinia as a luxury resort for a largely villa-owning clientele, the consortium soon launched a number of other enterprises, a supermarket and a ceramics factory among them.

Soon Sardinia was to him what Monte Carlo used to be to Aristotle Onassis, except that he was never beset by troubles with the ruling prince. In Sardinia the only prince who counts is Karim, and even the island's notorious bandits keep away from the Costa Smeralda because they think that the Aga Khan is good for Sardinia.

Two months later, in January 1963, after another Far Eastern tour, East Africa's leading Ismailis, some twenty of them, who were on the boards of the Jubilee Trust and the Jubilee Insurance (community leaders and board members were virtually identical) attended a conference with the Imam at Val d'Isère in the French Alps. The grand old men of his grandfather's reign gathered around the young leader, some of them clearly feeling that they were ushering in the end of their own epoch. Like a fairy-tale patriarch and wise man with experience rather than academic training, Count Lakha, though a very wealthy man, was not really attuned to the language of the Kienbaum Report which was dotted with 'concepts', 'forecasts', 'evaluations' and 'statistics'. Count Abdullah's



flashing eyes signalled disapproval but total deference to the Imam superseded all other considerations. Count Verjee, like Sir Eboo Pirbhai, a member of his country's Legislature, was less antagonistic.

Dr Hengel was called in to give a final summing up of the new shape of things. I.P.S. would seek out new business opportunities and would be staffed with experts (management consultants) to advise the average businessman, maintain liaison with other Ismaili communities and disseminate information about technological progress in the western world. The amount needed to launch three East African I.P.S. companies—in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika—was £1 million but when, even at this late stage, doubts were raised, the Aga Khan simply said: 'I will finance it!' and—proof of his confidence in ultimate success—put up nearly the whole amount. I.P.S. was destined to expand into an international organisation.

It took years for the community to match the Aga Khan's investment but governments of the countries where I.P.S. came into being quickly associated themselves with the companies, taking up a share—the Ivory Coast forty per cent, the Congo (Kinshasa) thirty per cent. Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda made only nominal investments but when I.P.S. Pakistan launched sixty per cent of the capital on the stock market, the issue was over-subscribed, a rare token of public faith in a new venture of this kind. I.P.S. Geneva became a technical clearing house to co-ordinate activities, isolate problems, suggest solutions and prepare agenda. The total investment amounted to about ten million dollars of which fifty per cent was the Aga Khan's.

To the outsider it may have looked as if this global transaction came about, so to speak, between two of the Aga Khan's training sessions on the ski slopes. The scope and success of the intricate international finance operation suggests otherwise. For the Ismaili community it was a historic turning point, a practical application of the Prophet's exhortation: 'Have enterprise, expand, spread out!' By taking Ismaili businessmen boldly into the modern age, the young Aga Khan had managed to link the underdeveloped societies in which he had one foot with the highly developed countries in which he had the other. But the going was often hard and there were many set-backs. Sometimes his experts were despondent, lost



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hope and wanted to give up: 'Had it not been for His Highness's strength,' one of them said, 'the whole thing might have collapsed.'

The enterprise owed its stability to him and he was already thinking ahead. His aim was to turn I.P.S. into a public company when the time was ripe—it largely depended on the speed of development. In the meantime, this novel kind of organisation, privately run with government participation, appealed to foreign investors and accomplished more than a government agency could have done: 'We can move faster,' Dr Hengel said, 'we are not bound by red tape!' The Aga Khan side often outvotes their government partners on an I.P.S. board.

The Aga Khan's associates are bubbling over with enthusiastic accounts of how it works. In Karachi, Mr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, the youthful Managing Director of I.P.S. Pakistan, told me how the government of the Ivory Coast asked the Aga Khan to help them with the establishment of a sack factory: 'His Royal Highness instructed me to fly to the Ivory Coast and prepare a feasibility study,' Mr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha recalled. 'When the result was positive H.R.H. told us to go ahead. The Ivory Coast invested handsomely in I.P.S., the plant was built to our designs and was opened by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1967.' The I.P.S. manager is equally fulsome in praise of the welfare work which goes hand in hand with the Aga Khan's industrial activities. Of the 15,000 workers employed by the Peoples and Crescent Jute Mills in East Pakistan, over forty per cent are housed by the company (and none in the one-bedroom accommodation which the Aga Khan condemns). All have the advantage of primary and high schools for their children, dispensaries, maternity homes, workers clubs and co-operative stores.

The schools, in particular, were planned in close co-operation with the Aga Khan who asked to see the plans and discussed such details as the light angle in relation to the blackboards, the design of the school uniforms and the rules about discipline. Almost in the same breath he examined offers for the jute mill— one for ten million dollars for one of them. Reports on I.P.S. schemes under consideration piled up on his desk—in 1969, there were twenty-two involving amounts from fifty thousand dollars upwards.

Everywhere, as another member of an I.P.S. Board explained, the Aga Khan's investments were inspired by more than purely com-



mercial considerations. In his view a project should make money but needed to go beyond that and make an impact in the political or sociological field. The primary objective was to get things moving without losing money. With his directive in mind, the Aga Khan's experts began to roam the world in search of suitable projects in underdeveloped countries. They examined proposals which came in great numbers: 'We get hundreds,' Dr Hengel said, 'people think we are sitting on a pile of money.' One typical request came from Sir Ahmad Yar, H.H. Beglar Beg, the Khan of Kalat, who, in November 1968, wrote a personal letter to the Aga Khan:

'My Dear Friend, I trust this letter will find Your Highness in the best of health and happiness. I am inspired to write it because your beloved grandfather and I were friends—your grandfather has been one of the pillars and builders of Pakistan (whose memory) has left a very deep impression on the minds of millions of Muslims. I am also one among them. I am very happy to know that your Highness is following his tradition . . . You have undertaken various economic development projects in Pakistan and in the short time of your Imamath have been able to win the hearts of millions of your followers. As the Khan of Kalat I have a tremendous responsibility to the millions of Baluchis in our region, a very important part of Pakistan, blessed with natural resources and fertile land which has never been allowed to be developed, has in fact been completely neglected. As an admirer of the Ismaili community, I must say that their methods of handling business and trade are very methodical, satisfactory and honest without intrigues and political ambition . . .'

The upshot of the letter was a request to the Aga Khan for help in exploiting and developing the natural resources of Kalat. It outlined an ambitious programme on which, the Khan of Kalat added, he had the general guidance and approval from the President of Pakistan. The Aga Khan referred the letter to I.P.S. with instructions to investigate the feasibility and profitability of the scheme.

Sometimes I.P.S. returned from investigations with figures which did not warrant an investment. When one such negative result was communicated to the local Ismailis, they appealed to the Imam and begged him to reconsider. 'Go back there and start something!' the Aga Khan told his experts. 'Start a hotel or a small factory!' They protested: 'There is no market, Your Highness, it will not pay.



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You will never get your money back.’ The Aga Khan insisted: ‘Never mind, my spiritual children expect me to help them—whatever the cost, help them I shall!’ In September 1963, he went to the Congo as guest of the government and promised to launch a development project: ‘Not many people would have invested in the Congo at that time,’ one of his aides remarked.

Of his own enterprises, the East African newspapers seemed closest to his heart. He personally supervised the reorganisation and commissioned a German psychologist to carry out motivational research into what readers wanted. As a result, foreign news reporting was stepped up, greater emphasis was placed on the news behind the news and the Fleet Street approach abandoned. Michael Curtis carried out the changes and took charge of the firm’s expansion into commercial and book printing and packaging which proved highly profitable. A Swahili language paper, *Taifa*, was brought out, new magazines came into being. Within a year or so the group was beginning to make money and the Aga Khan had the satisfaction of seeing the first of his own enterprises prosper. He has since left control largely in the hands of the man on the spot.

The *Daily Nation* chronicled Kenya’s fast strides towards sovereignty. In December 1963, after six months of internal self-government, the country emerged from British colonial rule. When he arrived for the official ceremonies the Aga Khan was cordially received by Kenya’s President Kenyatta and celebrated as an early supporter of Kenyan independence. The President attended the opening of a nurses’ home and training school at the Aga Khan Platinum Jubilee Hospital in Nairobi, and Prince Karim asked him to accept Caledonian House (popularly known as Aga Khan Bungalow) as a personal present. Then the Imam of the Ismailis who, as he said, was concerned for their whole lives, addressed a strong and unequivocal ‘Unto Caesar . . .!’ message to his community and asked them to give their temporal loyalty to the new state and adopt the nationality of the country in which they lived and worked. He repeated the message in Zanzibar and Uganda—a stroke of political genius from which every Ismaili in East Africa profited. On the advice of the Imam they soon went a step further and associated themselves in business with indigenous East Africans who shared the benefits from Ismaili industry and progress. Ismaili schools and

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1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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The author addressing a gathering at a ceremonial luncheon in his honour.
On the right of the picture is Mr Amirali Fancy, the Aga Khan's representative
in Pakistan. *(Camera Press)*



Karim Aga Khan, ski-ing at Charamillon in 1962.

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The Aga Khan and his bride, formerly Lady James Crichton-Stuart, at their marriage in a Moslem ceremony conducted by the chief Imam of the Paris mosque, October 28th, 1969. (Keystone)

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hospitals restricted the quota of Ismaili pupils and patients to make room for Africans. Asians, even second and third generation Asians, are still not quite at home in East Africa but those who are Ismailis are accepted as Kenyans, Tanzanians and Ugandans.

Little of all this percolated to Europe, where the Aga Khan continued to be regarded simply as a rich young man, less of a play-boy than his father, less of a character than his grandfather but as a handsome, pleasant young aristocrat eminently eligible for a place in the gossip columns. Those who kept their eyes on him, as I did, watched him at Innsbruck in Austria early in 1964 competing in the winter Olympics in the Iranian colours, doing well but not well enough to be 'among the medals'. He was seen at most major race meetings in England and France and the output of his studs commanded respect (he even bought a new stud, Bonneval) but on the Côte d'Azur—anywhere in fact—the long-focus lenses of the magazine reporters were still trained on him (and Annouchka von Meks).

More and more of his time was spent in Sardinia and in this summer he again played host to Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon who were staying at one of his cottages. On August 26, 1964, the Aga Khan took the Princess and her husband on his yacht *Amaloun* on one of those leisurely, soporific cruises for which Sardinia is an ideal starting point. Their destination was the neighbouring island of La Maddalena but they had not gone very far when *Amaloun* hit a rock and sprung a leak. The yacht was taking in water and two fishing smacks seeing her in distress hurried to the scene. Next day's papers, with a sense of the dramatic, reported that 'the Aga Khan directed the operation of abandoning ship'. He helped Margaret and Tony transfer to a dinghy. They were hoisted aboard one of the fishing boats which landed them safely at Porto Cervo.

Amaloun was quickly repaired but the Aga Khan soon became fascinated with the work of a French-American designer who produced a new revolutionary type of motorboat with an aircraft turbine. He bought it and named it *Silver Shark* (after his colt who was well on the way to his record stake winning of one million francs or nearly £80,000). On one of its first outings, *Silver Shark*—the motorboat, not the horse—was shaken by an explosion. The engine blew up. No one was hurt but the boat sank without trace.



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That winter he went to Pakistan for a month, making the rounds of *jamatkhanas*, hospitals, schools and universities, most of which carry plaques to commemorate 'the auspicious occasion' of his visit. At Islamabad, the new capital, he had a few pertinent things to say about architecture, and at Dacca, in a philosophical mood, he made a speech from which Ismailis are fond of quoting this passage: 'The tapestry of Islamic history is studded with jewels of civilisation; these jewels poured forth their light and beauty; great statesman, great philosophers, great astronomers; but these individuals, these precious stones, were worked into a tapestry whose dominant theme was Islam, and this theme remained dominant regardless of the swallowing up of foreign lands, foreign cultures, foreign languages and foreign people.' His one weakness, due probably to his Degree in History, he said, was that he liked to look backwards before going forward.

Karachi gave a civic reception in his honour in the course of which he was asked whether he could help to establish a medical college in the city. The suggestion struck a chord. Only a few days earlier his Ismaili followers had told him that there was a great need for a hospital in Karachi—the two projects seemed to go together. What followed was a good example of his *modus operandi*. He promptly appointed a 'Hospital Advisory Committee', put experts to work on estimates of the cost and gave instructions to look for a suitable piece of land. He consulted legal experts and established the 'Aga Khan Hospital and Medical College Foundation' with an advisory body of twelve leading medical men and superintendents of medical colleges.

In the passage of time an estimate put the cost of the scheme at between £4.5 million and £5 million: 'His Highness wanted to put up the whole amount,' Amirali Fancy told me, 'but was persuaded to give members of the community and philanthropic institutions an opportunity to contribute.' The Ford, Rockefeller and Asia Foundations were expected to give support, manufacturers to donate plant and machinery—one offer was of a cobalt unit. Several countries offered to send doctors to work free of charge and to train Pakistanis. The Foundation was kept open to all. A sixty-five-acre site was acquired and Pakistan's biggest hospital was in the making. (The project owed much to the Health Board of Pakistan's Ismailis under



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Dr Habib Patel, a fantastic organisation responsible for a dozen hospitals, maternity homes, children's nursing homes, health centres for Ismailis in countless villages and eighteen hundred volunteers serving on its committees.)

The range of the Ismaili organisation—or, perhaps, the I.P.S. companies—was mirrored in a four-day Ismaili Socio-Economic Conference chaired by the Aga Khan and attended by five hundred representatives from twenty-nine countries who assembled in Karachi. They exchanged information, listened to experts and were addressed on global problems by the Aga Khan. Surprising how he managed to think big without losing sight of smaller projects. He inspected the Pak Ismailia Co-op Bank branch in the Ismaili stronghold of Garden East, one of many in the country, through which the community conducts its business and private transactions (when I called some time later, I was greeted by a martial-looking uniformed guard with rifle and gun belt) and visited the Girls' Academy where, surrounded by the happy orphans, he impulsively decided to enlarge its scope and put up the money for a neighbouring plot of land to build an extension. At his next port of call, the 'Aga Khan Garden School', the youngsters received a message which was framed and now adorns a wall:

'My beloved spiritual children,' it reads, 'this school has been conceived to help you, children, get the maximum out of your education. A lot of time, a lot of effort, a lot of money has been spent on this institution, and I would like all those young spiritual children who will go to this school, to treat it with pride, that is to keep it in the cleanest possible state, not to scratch the desks and tables, not to mark the walls, not to mess up the school at all. You may be surprised that I should mention these matters in a *firman* to my *jamat* but I would like my young spiritual children who will use this new institution not to ruin it for the spiritual children who will use it after them . . .' When I visited the school three years later, it was as clean as on the day it opened.

The Aga Khan was in a happy frame of mind when, in the company of several Ismailis, he went to visit Tekri, 'Honeymoon Lodge', his grandfather's birthplace high up on a hill. At the bottom of the steps leading up to the house, he told his followers to stay behind: 'He went up alone,' one of them told me, 'meditated and



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said his prayers. He was there for about ten minutes but when he came down his mood had changed. He was serious, thoughtful, nostalgic: "I want to build a house here for myself," he said, "it reminds me of the past." 'As if the community had long guessed his thoughts they were ready with plans to fulfil his wish. The occasion was his twenty-eighth birthday, the first time he had spent this Ismaili holiday in Karachi. The official record has the following entry:

'December 13, 1964: A Unique Event took place at Karachi when Mowlana Hazar Imam celebrated his birthday for the first time with the *jamats* in the grand special Durbar held at the Aga Khan Gymkhana grounds amidst the delegations of Ismaili communities from all over the world. On this occasion, Ismailis requested Imam-e-Zaman to be graciously pleased to accept their humble gift of a bungalow to be constructed by them in Karachi at a site where Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah of revered memory was born.' (As to Tekri, a commercial firm offered a considerable amount for the place to turn it into a hotel. The Aga Khan declined—Honey-moon Lodge is not for sale at any price.)

The Durbar was an oriental affair. Followers prostrated themselves and kissed the Imam's hand. Seeing him in this setting, it was difficult to identify him as the Aga Khan Europe knew so well. He was indeed a different person, and not only because of the glittering robes and the *paqri* he wore. Even when, dressed in a lounge suit, he attended the wedding of young Zool Khanbai, Sir Eboo Pirbhai's nephew, to Amirali Fancy's pretty daughter Naseem (a symbolic union between the Ismaili communities in Asia and Africa), he was every inch the oriental Imam. In the Gymkhana, five thousand wedding guests were as anxious to pay him homage as to congratulate the young couple.

The pattern of his life and work seemed set. Peripatetic and apparently erratic, it yet had a rhythm which did not change much. Paris—and racing—in the spring; London for the Derby, the Oaks, the Newmarket Sales with excursions across the Irish Sea to his stud farms (two of which, Ongar and Williamstown, he sold in 1966, leaving four); Gstaad in winter, until he sold 'Chalet Daranoor' and moved to St Moritz; South of France and Sardinia in summer (Sardinia any odd time); Asia and East Africa for long tours every

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third year plus several brief trips in between; regular flights to the United States. Receptions and honours wherever he went—frequently he was the host, as in London when he gave a dinner to Pakistan's President, Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Meetings with heads of state—Dr Milton Obote in Kampala, President Mobutu in the Congo, President Leopold Senghor in Senegal around this time—religious ceremonies in mosques and *jamatkhanas*, community leaders reporting to him in France; business conferences in his Geneva H.Q. where Dr Peter Hengel was in charge.

Contact with his family was close. He saw his mother in London and Aryn in New York. Having received his Master of Arts Degree at Harvard, the Aga Khan's younger brother, a tall, studious, unhurried bachelor, inhabited a four-level, three-bedroomed house in New York, often cooking his own meals or even for guests. He joined the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs but was clearly destined sooner or later to transfer to his brother's staff where his special status in the Ismaili community would be immensely useful in intricate negotiations on the Imam's behalf—his first assignment was a study of agricultural opportunities for Ismailis in East Africa. The United Nations also claimed Prince Sadruddin who chose international public service as a career. For a descendant of the much persecuted early Ismailis, it was fitting that he should become High Commissioner for Refugees, refusing to accept more than nominal payment for the job. The fortune inherited from his father gave him substantial interests in a variety of enterprises, a share in a major American hotel group among them.

The death of Prince Sadruddin's ex-wife, who took her own life, was one of two personal tragedies which the family suffered—years later it was echoed when her jewels fetched over half a million pounds at auction in Geneva. Patrick Guinness, Prince Karim's half-brother, died in a motor crash leaving his beautiful young wife Dolores and three small children. A friendship which developed between Karim and Dolores soon began to feed the rumour-machine and marriage between them was confidently predicted ('The God Consoles the Widow—Karim Khan's Love Remains in the Family' was the kind of headline which made him wince—this one was in the German magazine *Der Stern*). The rumour-mongers were proved wrong but



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did not give up easily. When, on one of his rare excursions to a night-club, he was seen dancing with a pretty girl, the *paparazzi* were convinced they had discovered a new 'girl-friend'. The young lady was his half-sister Yasmin whom he was giving a night out in Paris.

1967 was a special year in the Ismaili calendar but the Aga Khan did not change his routine and still bounced like a shuttle-cock from continent to continent. He flew to the United States for a fortnight's visit, returned to Geneva to preside over the second World Ismailia Socio-Economic Conference and in Paris met a gathering of Ismailis resident in Europe. In the course of a two-month tour of Africa, he was present when President Kenyatta opened the new £500,000 I.P.S. Building in Nairobi. On July 11, he completed ten years of 'Glorious Imammat', occasion for another demonstration of fanatical devotion from millions of followers. Going back to the family seat in Bombay, he held a Durbar at Hassanabad, linking his own Imammat with that of his grandfather. But there was no question of him being weighed in silver, gold, diamonds or platinum, little likelihood in fact that he would ever submit himself to the traditional ceremony. He received presents, illuminated addresses; newspapers published special editions and volumes of his speeches and his activities over the past ten years celebrated the occasion. He was only thirty-one years of age but the community already bore the stamp of his youthful personality.

Honours still came hard and fast. One that pleased him more than most was the honorary degree of Doctor of Law which the University of Peshawar offered him in recognition of his services to education—as the Prophet Mohammed said: 'To acquire education is the duty of every Muslim, man and woman!' Months before the appointed day, his staff began to collect material for his speech. He discussed the topic with them, discussed it again and again, before settling down to write—and rewrite—the speech, a week's hard work during which he sometimes spent six hours a day at his desk.

At Peshawar he was received by the Governor of West Pakistan and the University's Vice Chancellor who spoke glowingly of his efforts for Pakistan. The Aga Khan's response was a learned review of Peshawar's colourful history which somehow took him to the more contemporary subjects of television and the permissive society:



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‘What has been called the permissive society,’ he said, ‘where anything goes, nothing matters, nothing is sacred or private any more, is not a promising foundation for a brave and upright world.’ Was he thinking of extremism and permissiveness in politics? Another year or so, and this was the spectre that faced Pakistan. A wave of unrest and riots swept the country and President Ayub Khan stepped down. His picture by the side of Jinnah’s and the Aga Khan’s in many an Ismaili office and home was soon replaced by that of his successor General Yahya Khan: ‘Politically I am not involved but I am a shareholder of the jute mills there,’ the Aga Khan told me soon after the news of the grave disturbances in East Pakistan. Like workers throughout the country, the twenty thousand employees in the jute mills received a rise of twenty per cent which could only make it more difficult to compete against chemical substitutes which already threatened the industry.

There was tension in Africa, too, but, although responsible for communities in several countries with widely different political systems, he managed to keep out of political involvement with surprising dexterity. Kenya was moving towards a one-party system and Tanzania was extending state control over the economy but his relations with East Africa’s leaders were an asset to Ismailis and he was full of new plans and projects from which the economy of their countries could only profit.

With a burst of energy he was dealing with so many things, it looked as if he was in a hurry to put his house in order.



CHAPTER XVII

IN the winter of 1968–9 Karim Aga Khan made a break with the habit of a lifetime. He left Gstaad and put his chalet on the market. Did he want to get away from the past, from his childhood, his boyhood, his youth ? He was certainly not giving up ski-ing and his move, when he made it, took him no farther than the hundred and fifty miles which separate Gstaad from St Moritz. Undecided as yet whether to build himself a house in Europe's premier winter-sports resort, he took over the chalet of Greek shipowner Stavros Niarchos. His routine was hard work, hard ski-ing and more hard work but occasionally he slipped into the Palace Hotel where his grandfather had spent two wars and which remained the winter rendezvous of the world's upper four hundred.

In retrospect he could not fix the exact moment when he first became aware of the hotel's most attractive visitor, who stood out among the 'beautiful people' of the jet set. At twenty-eight, she had the slim figure of a top model, the elegance of a woman of the world, features of rare line and symmetry, eyes the size of saucers and chestnut hair in a new and striking coiffure almost every day. Friends introduced him to the popular girl, who was known as Sally Croker-Poole although her correct name was Lady James Crichton-Stuart. She was the former wife of Lord James Crichton-Stuart, the Marquess of Bute's brother, whom she had married in 1959. The marriage, which remained without issue, was dissolved in 1966 and—Lord James being a Catholic—was annulled by the Vatican in 1970, before Lord James married again.

The Aga Khan soon discovered that Sally—'Lady James', as he pedantically called her—was born in New Delhi, the daughter of an English officer in the Indian army and spoke Urdu at least as well as



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he did. Although she did not share her new friend's love of ski-ing—she had broken her left leg on the slopes two years earlier, her right leg the following year and that was quite enough—they had a lot in common. She was a racing enthusiast and understood horses well, was deeply interested in Islam, in Muslim clothes, food and customs. Currently she was earning a fair amount of money as a very successful photographer's model. She was amusing, gay, sensible, with an aura of a *grande dame* such as attached to few women of the nineteen-sixties.

The oriental in the Aga Khan's personality invests him with a mystery and a quality of reticence which few can define. But to those close to him in these days it was no mystery that he was in love. In the past, however, whenever the subject of marriage cropped up—it was raised in subtle hints and humble inquiries from prominent followers, anxious for the Imam to take a wife and 'experience the happiness of married life and the blessing of an heir'—he had brushed it aside saying he did not want to be tethered by a collar around his neck, not yet. He no longer talked in these terms. The acquaintance with Sally, struck up in St Moritz, was renewed in London where the Aga Khan met her parents, Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Croker-Poole and his wife. He and Sally were seen together at the races and dining out in London, which provoked the inevitable predictions of an early marriage but people seemed no longer to believe their own gossip. During a summer visit to Sardinia, Sally met many of Prince Karim's friends including Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon.

As the Aga Khan told me, by that time they had already made up their minds to get married, not an easy step for either of them to take. For him it meant a profound change in his style of life, for her the prospect of arduous ceremonial duties in many parts of the world, a change of outlook, not to say a different philosophy of life. Her interest in Islam helped. She started taking instruction with a view to adopting the Muslim faith and learned her prayers in Arabic. At the end of it she found herself involved in long discussions with Si Hainza Boubaker, the Imam of the Paris Mosque: 'I did not realise it then but I was being quizzed,' she said to me. 'The object of a two hours' conversation was to find out how serious I was about my conversion.' She passed the test easily, was accepted into the Muslim faith and took the name of Salima which means 'Peace'.



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In the study of his Paris house overlooking the Seine, the Aga Khan put the finishing touches to a number of communal, industrial and personal projects. For some time to come he expected to be 'otherwise engaged'. Each decision involved big issues. Symbolising the expansion of his interests, he took delivery of the new Gruman Gulfstream jet, twice the size and cost of the old Mystère: 'It will enable me to visit my community more frequently,' he told me. He approved plans for a building project in central London where a new headquarters—*jamatkhana*, social centre, shops—for his growing community in Britain would soon be going up. His East African tourist operation was already under way associating him even closer with Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. To cope with the growing volume of work he initiated a reorganisation of his team and recalled Michael Curtis from Nairobi to Europe.

After the initial stage during which the infrastructure was created, and the second stage when the accounts were balanced and the first profits were made, the Aga Khan organisation was now moving into third gear. A young man with power over millions of followers, experience and entrée in parts of the world which did not readily welcome westerners, and with a lot of money at his disposal, he was now recognised as a leading international industrialist in his own right with whom American and other banking, hotel and aviation interests were anxious to join forces.

Preparations for his wedding were going ahead at several levels. In Muslim law, Lady James's previous marriage was no obstacle. In any case the annulment was going through. Plans had to be co-ordinated with Ismaili communities for whom the Imam's wedding would be a tremendous event. A marriage contract had to be drawn up including financial provision for the future Begum Aga Khan. The date for the announcement of a formal engagement was fixed for October 8, 1969, to be made from Paris where Lady James was staying with her parents.

Carefully timed to reach communities as far apart as East Africa, Syria, Pakistan and India simultaneously, the announcement brought hundreds of reporters from all over the world to Paris. They were laying siege to the Aga Khan's house in the rue des Ursins, bombarding his associates with telephone calls and searching for him and his elusive English bride who took refuge in a chalet



behind the well-protected gates of one of his stud farms. Only one magazine photographer and one television cameraman were admitted to take 'official pictures'. Because my account of the Aga Khan, his family, his history and the Ismaili community would not be complete without the happiest chapter in his life, it was arranged for me to meet him and his fiancée 'at a secret address'—the offices of Maître André Ardoin in the Avenue de l'Opéra in Paris. The Aga Khan and Lady James came by separate routes and staged a joyful reunion after what was obviously only a short separation.

He was wearing a smart dark suit, belying his reputation as an over-casual dresser, and Lady James wore a simple black couture dress, a five-row pearl necklace and a twenty-carat pear-shaped diamond engagement ring. Her present to him were gold cuff links: 'Gifts are a fairly common thing among Muslims on the occasion of betrothal or marriage,' the Aga Khan explained, 'but an engagement ring has no religious significance.' Lady James's eyes sparkled as brightly as the stone.

Our three-cornered conversation developed into a spontaneous exchange between them: 'When we first met,' Prince Karim said to her, 'I had no idea you knew so much about Islam.' They discussed the meaning and implications of a Muslim marriage, so different from the Christian tradition: 'It is a practical and contractual matter,' the Aga Khan said to me adding quickly, 'but none the less serious for that. In taking Lady James for a wife, I am entering a contract.' Lady James nodded: 'It is more like a civil marriage,' she said.

There was no mistaking their devotion to each other. They were looking forward to a life together and, though there is no such vow in a Muslim marriage, something about them seemed to say: '... until death do us part.' The subject of an heir came up: 'Naturally I would like a boy,' Prince Karim admitted—'Your future wife is dying to give you an heir,' Lady James interjected—'but I also hope for lots of children!' Vigorous approval on the part of Lady James. She spoke about her parents with whom she had been living until quite recently. As a child, Prince Karim, on the other hand, had not seen much of his parents: 'Once I have children,' Lady James said, 'I could not bear to be separated from them for long.'

She was not going to make changes in her husband's household:



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'Your house is so well run, "K".' She would be taking her place in the Ismaili community, welfare, health and housing being a Begum's traditional spheres and would obviously be a great help to the Imam: **'I would not marry a woman who I did not believe could help me,'** Prince Karim said. **'I hope to reorganise my life so as to have a little more time to be with my wife—and my children—though not at the expense of the community.'**

Our talk lasted over two hours. The wedding—two ceremonies, one civil, one Muslim—would be in the strictest privacy, with only members of the family and leaders of the community present. The date—October 28. Bringing their colourful robes and gold-threaded turbans, the Ismaili dignitaries were soon on their way to Paris to join two previous Begums (Yvette and Andrée), Prince Sadruddin, Princess Joan Aly Khan, Prince Amyn and Princess Yasmin. In East Africa and all over Asia, Ismaili communities, only two years after paying homage to the Imam on his tenth anniversary, were preparing illuminations, prayer meetings, special editions of newspapers and publication of little volumes to mark the occasion.

Outside the Aga Khan's house in Paris, even the most inveterate onlookers were giving up hope of setting eyes on the couple when he and Lady James arrived from Haras de Lassy, the stud farm near Chantilly, which had been their hideout for weeks. After a few minutes in the rue des Ursins, they emerged from a back door to be driven to the local Town Hall where they were received by Monsieur Georges Theolierre, Mayor of the fourth arrondissement, wearing his badge of office. Like his grandfather and his father before him, Prince Karim was complying with French law which requires a civil ceremony to accompany marriages of all denominations. After the brief formalities, the couple, duly married in western eyes, returned to the country.

The following Monday, the eve of the Muslim ceremony, the Aga Khan and his bride entertained Ismaili leaders representing millions of followers. At the big, charming house at Lassy, the Mir of Hunza and his Rani headed the imposing assembly of the world's outstanding Ismailis, wealthy and influential men—and their ladies—among them Sir Eboo Pirbhai from Nairobi, Mr Amirali Fancy and Captain Currim from Karachi. That evening the Aga Khan gave an intimate dinner for members of the family only.



By Tuesday morning the northern end of the narrow rue des Ursins had disappeared below a structure which allowed access to the Aga Khan's house straight from the Quai aux Fleurs. Architects had added an entrance hall and a neighbour's garden at the back was covered with a roof to provide additional space for the evening reception. But none of the elevated Europeans and Americans invited to toast the couple later in the day were present at noon when the Aga Khan and his bride entered their first-floor drawing-room where the ceremony was performed. Si Hainza Boubaker, in white burnous and headdress, and two other Muslim dignitaries were waiting to perform the Muslim wedding ceremony.

Wearing a long white *sherwani*, white trousers, white shoes and a black astrakhan hat, Prince Karim sat by the side of his bride who looked a little pale, her small face only just showing from beneath her white sari. They meditated in prayer while the principal guests, Princess Sultan Mohammed, the former Begum, Princess Joan Aly Khan and Mrs Croker-Poole took their seats on a couch to the right. Crowded against the gobelin-covered walls, the Ismaili élite stood in silent prayer.

After a recital from the Koran, the singing voice of the Rector filling the room, came the signing of the marriage contract, the central part of the ceremony. There were more prayers to Allah to bless the union and guide the couple to happiness. As Prince Karim and the Begum rose to leave the room, the Rani of Hunza in a traditional gesture strewed pearls in their path. They were garlanded and showered with orchids and rose petals. Downstairs the wedding guests were entertained with orange juice, sour milk and almond cakes. The Aga Khan and his bride cut a mammoth, three-tier wedding cake topped with his insignia, slices of which were sent to Ismaili communities around the world.

Precious stones, gold and platinum were among the presents from rich followers quite apart from the offerings of the community, to which each Ismaili had made a contribution. In the United States, England, France and Germany as well as in Africa and Asia, Ismailis staged celebrations to coincide with the Paris ceremony. In Karachi a mammoth reception was attended by President General A. M. Yahya Khan who cut a ceremonial cake and, addressing the huge gathering, praised the Ismaili community's 'zealous



contribution to the improvement of Pakistan's socio-economic life' ending with warm wishes for the young couple's 'very long and very happy married life'. Sweets and traditional foods were distributed. *Jamatkhana*s and Ismaili private residences were bright with illuminations. The celebrations which lasted three days ended with over a hundred community marriages.

In stark contrast with the solemn religious wedding ceremony earlier in the day, the Aga Khan's house in Paris that evening was the scene of a more conventional social occasion. From six p.m. onwards, a never-ending stream of limousines passed through the police cordon while the city's rush-hour traffic was diverted. They brought four, five, six hundred guests who presently found themselves transported into a sea of flowers. Thousands of candles illuminated the house as the guests were greeted by the Aga Khan and the Begum. Tables were laden with delicacies and footmen served champagne but soon found it difficult to make their way through the crowd which thronged the covered courtyards and the reception rooms.

Princess Margaret arrived on the arm of the British Ambassador—Prince Karim had sent his jet to London to bring her to Paris. Princess Ashraf, twin sister of the Shah of Persia, represented the biggest community of Shia Muslims. Members of the former royal houses of Italy and Yugoslavia rubbed shoulders with Barons Elie and Guy de Rothschild who still firmly occupy their thrones. Outstanding among the French racing fraternity was Madame Suzy Volterra, widow of the late great showman and rival of the old Aga and Prince Aly in many a classic race. Charlie and Oona Chaplin were there, so were David Niven and Danny Kaye. Henry Ford headed a strong American contingent and a dozen ambassadors represented the Aga Khan's link with their countries. A sprinkling of extremely attractive model girls among the guests testified to the new Begum's loyalty to old friends.

The couple's first official engagement together came the next day when they were the guests of the President of France and Madame Pompidou at an intimate luncheon in their honour, a rare privilege. They received an invitation from President Yahya Khan to stay with him during their visit to Pakistan early in 1970 when the Imam was due to introduce the Begum to the community. That evening the Gruman Gulfstream jet took them on their 'secret honeymoon'.



They travelled under assumed names which did not protect them for long. It was only a day or so before they were traced to Lyford Cay in Nassau.

At the start of his married life, the Aga Khan made a brave attempt to come out of his shell. With the Begum he attended the grandiose party of his neighbour, Baron Lopez de Rede. Guests were asked to come to the Baron's sixteenth-century Hôtel Particulier Lambert on the Ile Saint Louis dressed in oriental style—Karim and Salima could be truly themselves. Unlike most of the perambulating guests, Brigitte Bardot and Salvador Dali among them, the newly-weds stayed together in their corner and did not circulate.

The forthcoming tour of Pakistan presently involved the Aga Khan in a complicated process of selection and elimination. Hundreds of invitations from scores of cities, official bodies, religious, medical and educational institutions were pouring in. The timing, the drafting of speeches, more than two dozen of them, for different reasons and diverse audiences, briefings for himself and the Begum on places they were to visit and people they were to meet occupied much time and thought. Prince Karim had to be armed with instant responses to greetings from the President, local governors, military authorities, university chancellors—another honorary Degree of Law awaited him at the University of Sind. Schools, hospitals, housing estates, *jamatkhanas* confidently expected an 'auspicious visit' from the Imam and the Begum.

Ismaili couples planning to get married, even those as yet undecided, hastily arranged their weddings, either holding them up or putting them forward to coincide with the Imam's presence, once more creating the impression that his visits put up the marriage rate among his followers. Children were being spruced up to be worthy of the Imam's glance when their parents held them up for his inspection. With all this in mind, Michael Curtis was again entrusted with the conduct of public relations and the duties of an aide-de-camp. A small staff was selected to accompany the Aga Khan and Princess Salima in the Gruman Gulfstream. In East and West Pakistan, leaders of the community were preparing to form a guard of honour wherever the Imam turned up.

In the middle of January 1970 (after a quick excursion to St Moritz to breathe the mountain air), the tour got under way. The



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departure from Europe was as quiet and inconspicuous as the arrival in Pakistan was well publicised and tumultuous. The official welcoming party, including members of the Pakistan government, were swamped by thousands of Ismailis who came to greet the Imam and the Begum. Decorated floats, Aga Khan bands, boy scouts and girl guides accompanied them in triumph to their residence.

It was the same wherever they went. Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Peshawar, Dacca, Karachi were the main stations on the tour which took in scores of smaller places. Prince Karim talked to cabinet ministers, senior government officials, industrialists, educationalists, medical men. At Rawalpindi, he gave a dinner in honour of President Yahya Khan which was attended by the whole cabinet. Civic receptions, visits to ordnance and other factories, museums, hospitals, schools and speeches, speeches, speeches marked his progress. At Lahore he talked about architecture, in Hyderabad his subject was the revival of the Islamic spirit, in Dacca it was economics—and the jute industry—and in Karachi, where the couple spent the last fortnight of the trip, the emphasis was on the Aga Khan Hospital which promised to be a unique institution. When he spoke at the huge Garden East *Jamat-khana*, it was packed with ten thousand followers.

The Begum managed the tour, the first of many long and wearying official engagements ahead of her, with consummate skill and perfect assurance. She was at ease, charming and very beautiful. Among themselves, Ismailis made no secret of their pleasure in seeing the mother of the Aga Khan's heir, who, in the passage of time, would follow him as Imam of the Ismailis, the fiftieth in direct line of descent from the Prophet Mohammed.



1970 -The Aga Khans by Willi Frischauer (1116)

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GENEALOGY

PIOUS CALIPHS OF ISLAM

Abu Bakr AD 632
Umar AD 634
Uthman AD 644
Ali

FATIMIDS IMAMS & CALIPHS

Huseyn	656-661
Zayn al-Abedin	661-680
Muhammad ul-Bakir	680-713
Jafar Sadiq	713-732
Ismail	732-765
Mohd bin Ismail	765-775
Vafi Ahmed	775-813
Taki Muhammad	813-828
Razi Abdullah	828-840
Mahdi Mohammed	840-876
Quaim	876-934
Mansur	934-945
Moizz	945-952
Aziz	952-975
Hakim	975-996
Zahir Ali	996-1020
al-Mustansir	1020-1035
Nizar	1035-1095
Hadi	1095-1097
Mohatadi	1097-1135
Kahir	1135-1157
Zakaresalam	1157-1162
Ala Muhammad	1162-1166
Hasan	1166-1210
Alauddin Muhammad	1210-1221
Raknuddin Khurshah	1221-1255
	1255-1256

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Shamsudin Muhammad	1256-1310
Kassam Shah	1310-1370
Islam Shah	1370-1424
Muhammad bin Islam Shah	1424-1464
Mustansir billah II	1464-1476
Abdus Salaam	1476-1494
Gharib Mirza	1494-1497
Abúzar Ali	1497-1509
Murad Mirza	1509-1514
Zulfiqar Ali	1514-1516
Nurdin Ali	1516-1550
Khalilullah Ali	1550-1585
Nizar Ali Shah	1585-1629
Sayyid Ali	1629-1661
Hassan Ali	1661-1695
Kassam Ali	1695-1730
Abul Hasan Ali	1730-1780
Khalilullah	1780-1817
Shah Hasan Ali Shah, Aga Khan I	1817-1881
Ali Shah Aga Khan II	1881-1885
H.R.H. Prince Sultan Mohammed, Aga Khan III	1885-1957
H.H. Prince Karim Aga Khan IV	1957-



THE AGA KHAN EMPIRE

THE Aga Khan's empire, industrial and communal, can roughly be divided into seven categories. The frontiers between them are often blurred but, with minimal exceptions, the Aga Khan's control over his enterprises is absolute.

1. *Investment and Insurance*

Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust, Kenya
Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust, Uganda
Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust, Tanzania
Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust Service, Kenya
Jubilee Insurance Company, Kenya
The Aga Khan Bank in Asia (Pak Ismailia Co-op. Bank)
controlling ten industrial enterprises, including jute mills
and marble factory.

2. *Industrial Promotion Services (I.P.S.)*

I.P.S. Switzerland
I.P.S. Pakistan
I.P.S. Kenya
I.P.S. Uganda
I.P.S. Tanzania
I.P.S. Congo (Kinshasa)
I.P.S. Ivory Coast
I.P.S. Companies have stakes in seventy industrial enterprises
in Asia and Africa, producing textiles, cotton, shirts, socks,
blankets, shoes, suitcases, cosmetics, confectionery, pharma-
ceutical products, screws, kitchen utensils, fish-nets, cigar-
ette paper.

3. *Publishing and Printing*

East African Publishers and Printers (Holding), Kenya
East African Newspapers, Kenya
Uganda, African Newspapers, Uganda
Kenya Litho, Kenya
Tanzania Litho, Tanzania



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- Uganda Litho, Uganda**
Andrew Crawford Production
Tanzania Public Relations Company
African Life Publications, Kenya
4. *Studs and Stables:*
Ireland
Gilltown
Sallymount
Sheshoon
Ballymanny
France
Marly la Ville
Lassy
Saint Crespin
Bonneval
350 horses (Four stallions and eighty-one brood mares listed in the 1968 edition of H.H. Aga Khan Stud Book).
5. *Sardinia*
Societa Alberghiera Costa Smeralda (Hotel Group)
Agenzia Immobiliare della Costa Smeralda (Real Estate Agency)
Societa Porto Cervo (Harbour Company)
Alimentaria Sarda (Trading Company and Supermarket)
Alisarda Airline
Marinasarda (Boat Sales and Hire)
Bianca Sarda (Laundry)
Cerasarda Ceramics Factory
Servizi Tecnici Generali della Costa Smeralda (Clients Consultants)
6. *Community Institutions in Asia and Africa*
Five hundred schools
Hospitals
Social Institutions
Sports grounds
Real Estate and housing colonies
Jamatkhanas
7. *Private Holdings*
Shares (Oil), Real Estate, Residences

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